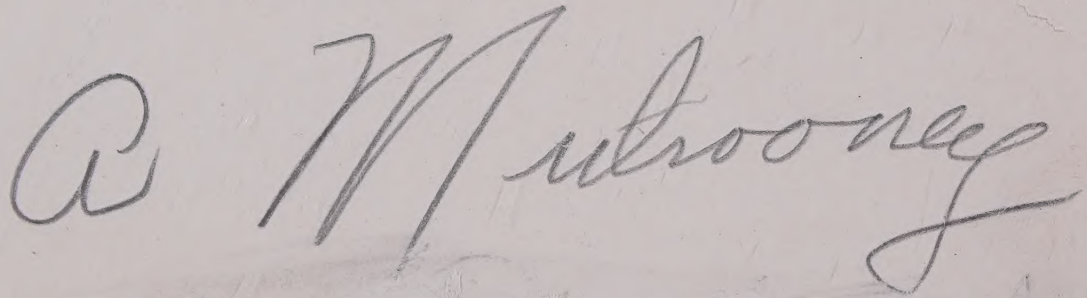
JOURNEYS WITH OUR LORD



"I am the Good Shepherd."

JOURNEYS WITH OUR LORD

REFLECTIONS FOR THE HOLY HOUR

BY THE

REV. JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S.J.

Author of "Under the Sanctuary Lamp,"
"The Fountains of the Saviour,"
"On the Hills with Our Lord,"
"On Israel's Hills."

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TO THE MEMORY
OF MY BELOVED MOTHER
NOW, AT LAST,
AFTER A LIFE-TIME OF NINETY YEARS,
AT REST IN THE BOSOM OF GOD,
A SINCERE AND ARDENT LOVER
OF THE SACRED HEART.

PREFACE

This small volume contains papers written each month for *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. The popularity of the series and the solicitation of many indulgent friends have again induced me to put them into permanent shape. They are intended for those who wish to form the habit of daily meditation and spiritual reading. Possibly devout souls may be aided by their use before and after Holy Communion. At times also they may serve as a companion in visits to the Blessed Sacrament. It is hoped that the clergy may continue to obtain from these simple papers suggestions suitable for the ever-spreading devotion of the Holy Hour. Again it is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to my unselfish confrère, Father Joseph H. Smith, S.J., whose revision has made this little book possible.

JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S.J.

St. Andrew-on-Hudson.

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THE TEST OF LOVE

If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. St. Mark 8:34.

THE tarrying at Cæsarea Philippi was drawing toward its close. Peter and his companions had unhesitatingly confessed the Divinity of their Master. Our Lord had, as it were, put their faith to the test by proclaiming to them His sufferings and humiliations, and even His death in Jerusalem at the hands of their Chief Priests. He now went on to teach them another doctrine—a consequence of His Passion, and one necessary for them in days to come, necessary, indeed, for all who wish to walk in His footsteps.

It is St. Mark who pictures the scene for us. "And calling the multitude together with His disciples, He said to them: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel, shall save it.'" Our Lord had rebuked St. Peter, who, in his mistaken idea of our Blessed Saviour's mission, had taken Him

to task in the words: "Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee." Having corrected the Apostle's false conception of His sufferings and death, He passed on to the doctrine of the cross, a consequence of that death.

So far our Blessed Saviour had said very little about the lesson of the cross. He had insisted but slightly upon the necessity of walking in His footsteps when His face would be turned towards the Mount of shame, and the way thither stained with blood; but now having foretold the sacrifice of Mount Calvary, having prophesied His ignominious death, the moment seemed to have come when He should bring home to His followers the need of participating by their daily lives in that sacrifice and atonement.

Possibly, too, there may have been some danger lest St. Peter and the Apostles should have thought that their open confession of Christ was sufficient in His service. They may have fancied that their profession of their Master's Divinity—important as it was—made them His followers in the fullest sense. There may have been a latent conviction, an unconscious impression, that belief in His Messiasship fulfilled all the conditions of loyal com-

panionship with Him. Possibly, then, our Lord, to correct any such false view, and at the same time to emphasize the necessity of a practical imitation of Him in daily life, insisted on accentuating His teachings on the doctrine of the cross.

Having foretold His sufferings and coming humiliations, our Lord makes it clear that our participation with Him in these sacred privileges must on our part be a free and deliberate choice. "If any one will come after Me" are His words. No one will be constrained, no one will be forced. His service must be free. The desire for His following must well up in the human soul, under the touch of grace, as the spring bubbles from the soil, the fountain from the earth. It must be spontaneous. God will allure, attract, entice, but never force us. Grace will be poured abundantly into the soul to win us, but we are ever free to accept or reject. We can serve Him in tears and in sorrow, but our services must not be tearful or sorrowful. It is the cheerful giver whom He loves.

"Let him deny himself." Self-denial is the first step in this willing following of our Blessed Saviour. It is, so to speak, a negative work in the spiritual life, and finds play in the

repression of whatever is sinful in us. Had we not fallen in Adam, had our nature not been tainted and vitiated, then there had been no need of this constant struggle to subject passion and inclination to reason and to God's law. But blinded in mind, weakened in will, rebellious in passion, with tendencies to that which is sordid and gross, the practice of self-denial must be constant and universal.

This life of self-restraint will consist in so mastering the deliberate acts of the will and so controlling its impulses that it is ever kept in conformity to God's will. As the magnetic needle always points due north, so under this power of self-control we do not permit our wills to be swayed by affections or judgments even a hair's breadth from the divine purpose. Mastery is needed over our mind with its thoughts that are forever roaming far and near, its memories that delve into the past, or its imagination that peers into the future. Memories that depress, imaginations that soil, that appeal to passion of one kind or another, all are included under this law of mortification.

The field of self-denial is very much widened if to it is added that of the senses. It is through these that sin steals in and enters

the soul. They are the channels through which fuel is fed to the passions of themselves sufficiently active. Control over them will weaken and starve our vicious inclinations. They must be kept in check, not only when indulgence would be sinful, but frequently where indulgence is lawful; if we want the mastery, they must be vigorously denied. We must not be content with merely resisting their attacks, with simply carrying on a defensive warfare, but must strive to do battle in the very camp of the enemy, and give no quarter. There can be no truce; it must be a fight to the finish.

How needed at this hour this doctrine of mortification; perhaps more needed than when amid the hills of Cæsarea Philippi, it fell for the first time from the divine lips of our meek and gentle Saviour! Consider the life of self-indulgence which confronts us at every turn. On all sides there is a freedom of action and opinion subversive of morals and sacred truths, that displays an appalling catering to self-will. This, while shocking and sinful, would be more wicked, if ignorance and conceit, often little suspected, did not, to a certain extent, palliate, though it does not excuse, such opinions and views.

How common it is to find men and women

of apparent culture, educated at non-Catholic colleges, minimizing Catholic teaching and giving a doubtful assent to the doctrines of the faith often ill-understood by them! This is not to be wondered at. In their studies Catholic truth was never explained to them. Their religious education is embraced in the five-minute sermon they grudgingly listen to at the shortest Mass on Sunday. Their reading is bounded by the daily papers and the short stories of the modern magazine. In their libraries and on their tables the search for Catholic works and publications will be in vain. They are daily breathing an atmosphere of irreligion and unbelief and yet it is these half-baked and diluted Catholics who question the teachings of the Church; and social climbers, as most of them are, represent the Church's doctrine in the irreligious environment in which they move. Yet these are the men and women who will enter into mixed marriages and send their children to non-Catholic schools. "Not by such help" will the Church be defended. From the seed of such no salvation will come to Israel. How needful in their lives the doctrine of self-denial!

Again, consider the softness, the luxury, the love of comfort and ease, the fear of pain

which lower and smirch the lives of many Catholics of means. To God they grudgingly give the minimum of religious observance—the shortest Mass on Sunday when they find no excuse for absence, and an unwilling yearly Communion. They are driven to the altar by the threats of the Church. Their religious practices are painful duties, distasteful obligations, and not, what they ought to be, welcome privileges. Talk to them of mortification and penance, and you are speaking an unknown tongue. Urge them to a curtailment of delicate self-nursing, a restriction of effeminate luxury, and you will be regarded as a hard, unyielding Jansenist, or an exaggerated ascetic. They drift through useless, tiresome days and giddy nights in a display of dress, the pursuit of distraction and dissipation, and in the vulgar indulgence of the gross pleasures of the well-spread table. With what indignation they would resent the imputation that they are not only coarse and vulgar, but utterly lacking in the spirit of the Gospel! Indeed, they would resent the vulgarity more than the lack of the spirit of Christ's teaching. Into their minds dulled by feasting, and into their hearts rendered coarse by worldly ambition, and into their spiritually blind lives has not

entered the teaching of our Divine Saviour: "If any man shall come after Me, let him deny himself."

"Take up his cross." Understanding these words in a sense different from the self-denial just explained, they may be taken to mean the patient and cheerful endurance of the many trials which almost hourly come to us independently of our own choosing. The thousand and one opportunities of virtue which spring from our state of life, our health, our natural character, our surroundings, our successes or failures, the influence of others upon our lives, these and other incidents afford abundant opportunities of bearing the cross, often upon weary and wounded shoulders. Every day, as it is born, grows and dies, brings a full meed of occasions where our spiritual character is tested and our loyalty proved.

If faithful to the practices of virtue which are afforded, we are treading a safer way than the path of self-chosen or voluntary penance and mortification. For these acts which are not of our own choosing, but come in God's Providence into our lives, are apt to be freer from self-complacency and keep us closer to the blood-stained path which leads to Calvary. To neglect such opportunities or to murmur

"Lord, teach us to pray."

when they come and then indulge in spontaneous self-sought mortifications is a delusion not unfrequently met with in the spiritual life.

"Follow Me." These two short words bring us to the most important point in our reflections upon this teaching of our Lord. They are vital and, as it were, the soul of His doctrine on self-denial. They bring out prominently and emphasize the motive which should influence and animate us in the practice of mortification and in the acceptance of the various trials incident to our daily lives.

Of course, we can and ought to practise penance in a spirit of atonement for sin, to obtain the mastery over self and special divine graces, as well as to increase our merit in the Kingdom of Heaven. These motives are helpful and pleasing to God. But sooner or later, if we are to be generous and large-hearted in God's service, if our mortification is to be frequent and cheerful, not intermittent, neglected and grudging, the motive implied in the words, "Follow Me," must enter into and grip our souls. This motive must have such play in our hearts that even were there no sins in our lives to be atoned for, even had we complete self-control and there was no merit to be gained, we should, nevertheless select not Thabor, but

Calvary; not the sight of His face lit up and shining like the sun, but His countenance covered with blood, tears and shame.

The motive contained in the words, "Follow Me," is a strong personal love for our Blessed Saviour. This love prompts to a longing to be like the Master. Since His life was one of poverty and suffering, His death one of pain and shame, the true lover yearns to be like his Beloved. Since His lot was full often one of pain, His friends have no zest for pleasure. Since His lot was often one of sorrow, they desire no joy in life apart from Him. Tears are welcome, because tears welled up from His eyes and coursed down His cheeks. In their pilgrimage here below they can smilingly forego rest and repose, for His days were days of toil and labor. They do not want to be, as St. Bernard says, "delicate members of a thorn-crowned King." It is this motive that grips a soul and lifts it above the sordid ambitions of earth and its comforts, and renders it capable of great deeds for God and His Church.

To kindle more and more from day to day this personal love in our cold hearts we must gird ourselves for the daily practice of self-denial and foster in our souls a distaste for

earthly comforts and bodily ease. The strength to do this must come to us from our Lord's own tender Heart, and can be obtained only by frequent and earnest prayer. It can be got by kneeling frequently at the foot of the altar and pleading for it with our Blessed Lord in His Tabernacle. Go frequently and even daily to His holy table and feed your soul on the "Bread of the strong," the Bread that lives and makes us live.

No wonder hearts are weak, timid, cowardly. They are too far from and too unlike to the Heart of Christ. No wonder they are frightened by a life of sacrifice. If men and women would pray more under the light of the sanctuary lamp and strengthen their souls by frequent Communion, their minds would be illumined with regard to the things of God, their souls filled with holy desires, their hearts generous with lofty purposes, and their wills strong for performance as well as promise. But many stay away and are cowards. Their lives drift aimlessly on and nothing is accomplished for Him who did all for us.

A BROKEN HEART HEALED

Who healeth the broken of heart, and bindeth up their bruises. Ps. 146:3.

LEAVING Cæsarea Philippi, our Lord made His way down through the valley of the Jordan and by the Lakeshore till turning to the West He reached Mt. Thabor. Here He spent the night, as we know, with His three Apostles in the glory of His Transfiguration. Early in the morning, coming down from the mountain He cured a little boy possessed by a demon whom the Apostles had failed to drive out. The crowd, partly out of sympathy for the distressed father, and partly out of curiosity to see Christ and witness perhaps the wonders that flowed from His kindness and power, had accompanied from the Lakeshore the sorrowing parent and his afflicted son, and finding that our Lord was absent, they had made an unavailing appeal to the Apostles for the cure of the unfortunate boy.

The story was a sad one. The devoted father and mother had been blessed years ago by the birth of a child. There was now an added joy in their home because of the music

of the voice of the new-born son; but as the years died away joy was turned to sorrow, smiles gave way to tears, chords of sweet harmony dropped into a minor key and sighs and sobs replaced the songs of other days.

Very early in infancy the child began to act strangely, as the father described it to our Lord: "Master, I have brought my son to Thee, having a dumb spirit, who whensoever he taketh him, dasheth him, and he foameth and gnasheth with the teeth and pineth away." How sad the home, how crushed the mother's heart, how silent and disappointed the father's life!

Where high hopes had reigned, there was nought but tears and disappointment; the child, alas, had become dumb and his lips gave no longer the sweet sounds of infant prattle and affectionate greeting. There was no graceful play, no merry laughter in that lonely cottage by the sea, but twistings and contortions, foaming, frothing lips, gnashing teeth, and daily the loved child was rudely and roughly dashed to the ground by the evil spirit that possessed him. The roses of health did not bloom on those thinning cheeks, and dulness and dimness seemed to gather deeper in those eyes that had once been bright. Steps that

were never buoyant grew more halting and heavy, and as the Scripture tells us, the child was pining away under the eyes of loving heartbroken parents, helpless to do aught for its cure.

But one hope remained. Doctors had failed, their skill was powerless, their medicines had no efficacy. There were strange rumors in the land and by the Lake of an unknown prophet: a prophet, not reserved, cold or hard of approach, but a prophet who lived among the people and sympathized with them in their troubles, who healed their sick, gave sight to the blind, touched to new and vigorous life the dull, dead limbs of lepers. Would He have pity and cure their child? The father, hearing of the return of our Lord from Cæsarea Philippi to the neighborhood of Thabor, took his boy and with hope relit in his heart and a prayer on his lips came to the foot of the mountain to plead where pleading had never failed.

The Apostles had been unsuccessful in their efforts to banish the evil spirit and brought only disappointment to the grief-stricken father, in whose heart hope had almost died, when our Lord, with perhaps some of the glory of the night of vision lingering on His

countenance, came down from the mountain. To Him at once the distressed parent appealed, and that appeal, like every appeal which has ever welled out from human heart, was not in vain.

Jesus answered his cry and said: "O incredulous and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? Bring hither thy child, bring him unto Me"; and they brought him. These words doubtless applied to all gathered there that morning at the foot of the mountain. Among that throng were unbelieving Scribes and Priests and Pharisees; even the faith of the Apostles had not been strong enough to dispossess the child and the desolate father confessed his own weakness of faith.

The command of our Blessed Saviour was obeyed and the child was brought to Him. "And they brought him and when he had seen Him, immediately the spirit troubled him and, being thrown down upon the ground, he rolled about foaming." This was the last effort of the evil one to do his worst. He was evidently unwilling to be forced into the sacred presence, especially as he had shown contempt of our Lord's power in refusing to obey the command of His Apostles; but his reign in the soul of that child was over and his

triumph at an end. He could not stand unmoved before the gentle gaze of our Blessed Saviour Himself.

Seeing his child again under torture the poor father, his heart wrung with sorrow, cried out: "If Thou canst do anything help us, having compassion on us." As yet the faith of the father was not sufficiently strong and he, too, needed help from above, and so Jesus said to him: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And immediately the father cried out and with tears said: "I do believe; Lord, help my unbelief!"

The humility and faith of this prayer won from the Sacred Heart of Christ the favor so far withheld, the grace so eagerly sought. Such kindness had been frequent in the public life of our Lord. Recall the day when the poor woman, troubled with an issue of blood, came to Him, saying to herself as she drew up in the crowd behind Him: "If I shall touch but His garment, I shall be whole." Forthwith the fountains of blood were dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of the evil. Then with unspeakable comfort she heard the words: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." She had been healed by the touch of His garment.

Again one day in Capharanaum a centurion came to our Lord asking for the cure of his servant. That servant who by long years of fidelity had endeared himself to his master, "was ready to die." His life was slowly ebbing away, all hope seemed gone and soon that faithful servant, so dear to the family, would be laid away in his grave on the green hillside. Hurriedly the centurion approached, petitioning for that human life, and because of his faith his prayer was heard. Our Lord Himself testified: "I have not found so great faith in Israel."

Later on in His ministry, within sight and sound of the sea, within the confines of Tyre and Sidon, the Syrophœnician mother came pleading for her daughter who was troubled by an evil spirit. Her humble prayer, after an apparent harsh rebuff from the gentle lips of Him who could never be harsh, won the favor for the child, and her daughter was restored to health.

So in the present instance, the cry of faith which welled up in that father's heart, "I do believe; Lord, help my unbelief," obtained from our Blessed Saviour that the loved child, so long under the control of the evil one should be freed and given back in all the

beauty of boyhood health to the father who prayed for his cure with a heart full of faith.

In our own lives there is a sad and constant need of prayer. Without it no spiritual life is possible, no successful struggle against our enemies can be carried on. To expect progress in spirit without prayer is like striving to walk without feet. When prayer is absent from our lives, our minds, ever dark enough to supernatural truth, become enveloped in a blacker darkness; our wills always weak enough in their response to high motives and nobler impulses are inert, and strong passions, in others partially dormant, are in prayerless souls roused to fresh and vigorous activity. The world, never unattractive, glistens with renewed, multiplied and deceptive fascination before the eyes of those whose lips are silent and whose thoughts do not turn to the things of God. To be safe then, and to progress, we must pray, but our prayer to be heard must be the prayer of faith. Dead formulas do not constitute prayer. Moving lips, bended knees, joined hands and upturned eyes, though apparently prayerful, may be far from being really so. What our Lord required in the Gospel and what He demands from us to-day is unshaken trust that we shall receive what we

ask, if it be for our spiritual benefit and His greater glory.

If we kneel before the altar doubting that our petitions will be granted, if we ask with a fear that we may be refused, if we cry to Him for aid with a faint hope that only possibly we shall be heard, then we are far from the faith which He ever required on Galilee's hills and in Judea's valleys from those who appealed to Him. St. James says: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea which is moved and carried out by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Many of us, perhaps all of us, are wanting in this strong spirit of trust in God's willingness, aye His eagerness, to grant our petitions and to aid us in our needs. The truth is that even the very wish to pray at all is His greatest gift, and shows how His Sacred Heart yearns to give. How then can we doubt and be "of little faith"?

When this teasing distrust assails us and doubt hedges us about, when like Peter on the waves we feel our confidence slipping from us, or like the afflicted father we recognize the weakness of our faith, up from our hearts must well the cry: "O Lord, save us or we

perish," and on our trembling lips must be borne that father's prayer, "Help my unbelief." Who can question but that the doubts will vanish like the mists before the morn and His outstretched hand will help, His grace strengthen us and His love, more tender than a mother's, grant us what we ask?

LENGTHENING SHADOWS

And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain.
DANIEL 9:26.

AFTER our Lord, through the exercise of His merciful power, had brought comfort to the heart of the bereaved father by curing the boy who had been possessed by an evil spirit, He left the shadows of Thabor and with His Apostles made His way toward Capharnaum. On the journey, the Evangelist tells us that He once more spoke to His Apostles about His Passion. "And He taught His Disciples, and said to them, 'The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and after that He is killed, He shall rise again the third day,' but they understood not the word."

It would seem, as His public life was drawing toward evening, that His thoughts recurred more frequently to the subject of His suffering and death. The shadows of the awful crucifixion and death on Mount Calvary, that ever hung over His Divine soul, seemed to thicken and darken as the days of His earthly pilgrimage were closing in upon Him.

Hence, it is not unnatural to find in the Gospels more frequent allusions to the great sacrifice on Calvary, which He so yearned to offer up, and which was so soon to be consummated.

It was necessary that He should prepare the souls of His Apostles for the dark days that would come upon them, when the Lamb, "slain from the beginning of the world," would be sacrificed on Golgotha. They had already professed strongly at Cæsarea Philippi their faith in His Divinity. They were now fully convinced of His Divinity, but our Lord knew what a shock it would be to their belief when they saw His enemies in apparent triumph about Him at the foot of Mount Olivet when His Hour had come, and therefore it is that we find at this time so many allusions to His death.

The sacred mystery of the Passion was very dear to the Heart of Christ, and ever the object of His constant loving meditation and prayer. It was the great work of His life to which all else was directed. It was the work that He had come to accomplish, the supreme manifestation of His love for mankind, and hence He must often have lingered over it with tender affection. But this truth, so familiar and so dear to our Lord, would be a great

shock when made known in all its reality to His weak Apostles. There was always the danger that their faith in His Divinity might be shattered when the awful truth came upon them in all its force, and in all its nakedness.

In the prediction of His Passion, of which there is now question, our Lord dwells on an aspect of His sufferings, different from that upon which He insisted on other occasions. In the earlier references He spoke of the hatred of the Chief Priests, the cruelty of His enemies, the deep humiliation and intensity of His sufferings, but in this instance He seems to dwell particularly upon His betrayal, upon the disloyalty and ingratitude of Judas. Perhaps, as the time set for His Passion was drawing closer, and He looked into the face of the unfortunate Apostle, He felt more keenly, and in His own mind dwelt more frequently upon Judas's rejection of grace and the growth of the vice of avarice in his soul. Perhaps, even then Judas was rejecting lights and impulses of grace in his soul, and thus was preparing the way for his awful crime. Perhaps it was a special warning to His faithless Apostle, around whose soul the passion of avarice may have been tightening day by day. Possibly his loyalty to his Master was waning and his

allegiance lessening. His dominant sin may have been gripping his soul closer, as he saw the opposition growing round about his Master. But we can not doubt that the reference to His treacherous disciple manifests the pain in the Sacred Heart, as the thought recurred to Him that the man whom for three years He had trained, by the Lake and on the mountain-top and in the quiet valleys, would in a few months go over to His enemies and deliver Him into their hands.

At all events, this frequent allusion to the tragedy on Mount Calvary, the shadow of which was ever with Him from Bethlehem to Golgotha, brings home to us the need that we have in our own lives of making His sufferings and death the subject of our constant reflection. The thought of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, ought to be the ordinary spiritual nourishment of the devout soul. In the first place, our Lord's Passion is ever with us in our sanctuaries. In the Mass we have no sacrifice of goats and heifers, no types or symbols, but really the daily offering up of the Eternal Son of God on ten thousand altars; we have a sacrifice identical with the one accomplished on the cross on Good Friday. The Sacraments, too, ever active in human lives,

ever cleansing, ever sanctifying human souls are nothing but the application of the Blood-shedding of Golgotha. They are the application of the healing and sanctifying powers of the Precious Blood to our souls.

There will, of course, come into every life days when we shall be with the Master at Mount Thabor. There will be times when the eyes are bright and the cheeks are flushed, when smiles ripple over the lips and steps are buoyant, and at these times loyalty to our Blessed Saviour is easy and joyful. But in the lives of all of us there will be days when the smiles will be replaced by tears, when sighs, and not songs, will flow from our lips, when our steps will be slow and heavy, our minds dark and our wills sluggish. In such moments, and they are not unfrequent for loyal souls, it is the thought of the blood-stained face, the bowed head, the body cut with wounds, the sight of the Mother weeping at the foot of the Cross that will sustain and strengthen us.

When all is said, the Passion must be the stay of every human life. It has ever been so down through the history of the Church. During the lonely years that Mary tarried on this earth, after our Lord had bidden her farewell on Mount Olivet, Good Friday's sufferings

must have ever been in her mind and her heart. During the years of Magdalene's weary toiling her spirit would dwell, doubtless, upon the three hours that she stood at the foot of the Cross and looked up into the face of her dying Saviour; the early Christians in all the horrors of their torments and sufferings from fire and sword, from beasts and blood on the sands of the Roman arena, must have drawn strength from that sad scene on Mount Calvary. The missioners, whether laboring among the snowy ices of the North or in the fever-stricken marshes of the tropics, always have obtained courage in their solitude and loneliness from the sight of the crucifix. Before the image of their Saviour dying on the Cross they were strengthened for the great works that filled their days.

And so it must be in our lives, when sorrow casts its shadow over the soul, when death and silence sit at what once had been a cheerful, happy fireside, when failure dogs our footsteps, and success ceases to brighten our future, when we writhe under humiliation and disappointment, in every sorrow and in every solitude, in every pain, there is but one place where the poor bruised and crushed heart can find comfort and strength, and that is at the

side of the weeping Mother at the foot of the Cross.

It is to the skull-shaped hill of Calvary, with its memories of blood and of pardon that all ages of the world have turned. At the foot of that Cross all who have come with heavy burdens have had those burdens lifted from bruised shoulders, or grace has been given to bear them. Those who have come shedding bitter tears have had their tears sweetened and their sorrow lightened. There at the foot of that Cross, high above the raging of passion, the grip of inclination, the allurements of temptation, every sorrowful human heart has found a safe harbor. There strength has been given to the weak, comfort to the desolate, joy to the sorrowful, peace to the troubled, courage to the tempted, and the coldest hearts have been melted and bowed down in love. And so in our own lives, if we want the strength to resist the world's attractions and sin's allurements, to conquer our own weakness, we must get the help at the foot of the altar, where Calvary's great Sacrifice is daily renewed for our healing and our strengthening.

If at any time in the world's sad story this devotion was necessary, surely never was it more necessary than today. Softness, effem-

inacy, love of pleasure, fear of pain, shrinking from penance and mortification stand out and obtrude themselves on all sides. Even good Catholics, men and women, who make profession of the exact practice of their faith, seem in many cases not to realize and bring home to themselves that their religion requires a participation in the sufferings of Mount Calvary. Their lives are one whirl of pleasure, one wild hunt for amusement and dissipation. If sorrow comes into their homes, they murmur and complain. If their lot in this world is hard and strewn with thorns, they are far from reconciled, and become a ready prey to all manner of dissatisfaction.

Duties that are difficult and distasteful are shirked and works of supererogation that cost a sacrifice are omitted or performed grudgingly. There seems to be a forgetfulness of the truth that fell from our Lord's lips, "If any one will come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me." Yet without this practical participation in the sufferings and sorrows of the Crucified there can never be a vigorous and generous living up to our faith, never a close approach to the Sacred Heart.

In all our Lord's dealings with souls we

shall ever find that the one way to union and closeness with Him is the walk from the prætorium of Pilate to the naked heights of Calvary, and not the road from the Lake to Thabor. There will be times when for our comfort we shall stand on Mount Thabor, and in the gloaming look up into that loved face shining like the sun. But our usual and safest post will be at the foot of the cross with His sorrowing Mother, weeping Magdalene and the beloved John. None were in life closer to Him than Mary His mother, Magdalene the pardoned sinner, and the beloved Disciple; and they were privileged in the saddest of all sad hours to stand together closest to Him in His death. Had we been there that day, would we have turned away and passed Him? Why do we do so now, when He asks us to accept the cross?

TREACHERY UNMASKED

Who catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked. JOB 5:13.

AFTER the wonderful cure of the lunatic boy, wrought at the foot of Mount Thabor, our Lord, with His Apostles, made His way to Capharnaum. "And when they were come to Capharnaum they that received the didrachma came to Peter, and said to him: 'Doth not your Master pay the didrachma?' He said, 'Yes.'"

There was a tax imposed upon all Jews for the upkeep of the Temple and for its sacrifices and ceremonies. It was collected at the time of the three festivals of the year, one of which was the Feast of Tabernacles which was now close at hand. The foundation for the exaction of this tribute is found in the Book of Exodus, where we read: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'When thou shalt take the sum of the children of Israel according to their number every one of them shall give the price for their souls to the Lord . . . and the money received, which was contributed by the children of Israel, thou shalt deliver

unto the uses of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, that it may be a memorial of them before the Lord, and He may be merciful to their souls.'" This was the justification for the tribute exacted yearly from every Jew.

During the two preceding yearly festivals our Lord had been absent from the district about the Lake on His missionary labors; and so, the tax had not been asked from Him. Only recently He had stated in explicit terms that He was the Son of God. To this truth Peter had made open profession at Cæsarea Philippi. This new claim, so lately brought forward, may have suggested the doubt as to His paying tribute-money, and have made His enemies eager to test Him, in the hope of bringing Him into disrepute with the authorities, for it was evident to all that the opposition to our Lord among the rulers was growing day to day.

The collectors, then, possibly timid and fearful of approaching our Lord directly, applied for the tribute-money to St. Peter. Peter having a home in the town was, no doubt, known to them, and probably, too, his preëminence among his companions had not escaped them. To Simon, then, the question was put: "Doth not your Master pay the didrachma?" And

the Apostle's response was an immediate and characteristic affirmative.

Peter's answer was based, no doubt, on the fact that our Lord had heretofore paid the tribute. He must also have known that our Blessed Saviour had said: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil." It had not escaped Peter that our Lord, who undoubtedly disapproved of all formalism in the observance of the Law and in unreasonable tightening of its binding power, such as the exclusion of works of necessity and charity on the Sabbath, was in complete sympathy with the Law itself and its reasonable requirements and demands. No one ever reproved more sternly Pharisee and Priest for exacting an observance not required by the Law, and yet no one ever complied more fully with its letter and spirit than our Blessed Saviour in the whole course of His mortal life.

On the other hand, having made the claim to be the Son of God, our Lord must emphasize His Divinity by showing that He is not bound like others to the fulfilment of the requisitions of the Old Dispensation, even when willingly complying with them; hence, when the Apostle entered into the house, He

took care to bring home to His disciples this truth by the illustration which He proceeded to use. "What is thy opinion, Simon, the Kings of the earth of whom do they receive tribute or custom, of their children, or of strangers?" And he said: "Of strangers." Jesus said to him: "Then are the children free." Thus is brought home to His companions the fact that our Lord, being Himself the Lord of the Temple, was not bound to pay the tribute collected for the Temple's services. He, the Great High Priest, was surely not to pay the tax brought to the Priests on Mount Moriah by the whole people.

However, lest scandal should be taken, or offence given, and opposition aroused, our Lord condescended to submit to the tribute, and settle for it not, however, from the common purse, but by the exercise of His Divine power. He said to Peter: "But that we may not scandalize them go to the sea and cast in a hook and that fish which shall first come up take and when thou hast opened its mouth thou shalt find a stater. Take that and give it to them for Me and for thee." Our Lord thus complies with the law and pays the tax, but in such a manner as in no way to compromise the teaching that He is the Son of God, and there-

fore not bound by the law. Supplying the money after this infinitely royal fashion, He not only rejoiced the hearts of His Apostles, but what is of still greater moment, He confirmed their faith in His Divinity and strengthened the profession so recently made by Peter, that our Lord was "the Son of the Living God."

The collection of the tribute-money for the Temple services suggests a few practical reflections on the duty, encumbent upon all, of contributing to the support of their pastors and to the upkeep of divine worship. In the Old Law the tribe of Levi, from which were chosen those destined to minister in the Temple, and from which the priests were taken, was supported by the offerings of the other tribes. We read in the Book of Numbers: "And I have given to the sons of Levi all the tithes of Israel for the possession of the ministry wherewith they serve me in the Tabernacle of the Covenant." It was God's law in the Old Dispensation that a tenth part of all possessions should be by the tithes consecrated to Him for the priests and for the Temple and its liturgy. St. Paul very clearly lays down the obligation in the New Dispensation: "They who serve the altar partake with the altar. . .

the Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel."

This, then, is the precept binding upon all Catholics. They are bound to provide for the support of the Church and for their priests, so that they who serve the altar being freed from anxiety about temporal affairs may more freely and more fully attend to the divine services and the care of souls, for "every high-priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins."

Commonly speaking, this duty is fulfilled generously and self-sacrificingly. Witness the provisions made for the clergy, the large and up-to-date schools that dot our parishes, and the splendid churches, where it is our privilege to minister and worship. Only our Lord knows how much of sacrifice and of generosity these splendid monuments have entailed, and His loving Heart will know how to reward such admirable and self-denying liberality.

There are, however, in every parish a few who neglect this duty, and thus render heavier the common burden of the others, and it is people of this class who complain and criticise the priests for speaking of money; yet it is their failure to do their duty, their closeness

and stinginess which forces the clergy to dwell upon the question of dollars and cents. Money-gathering has no attraction for those who minister at the holy altar, and the priest would much rather preach the Gospel; but the stingy and tight-fisted, who always find fault, are the very ones who compel the frequent treatment of this unpalatable subject from the pulpit. If such people would show their zeal for religion by fewer murmurs and more money, less criticism and more cash; if they would make more use of the confessional-box, they would not be so shy of the collection-box, and if they were as exacting with their purses as they are with their priests, then there would be much less talk of money in our churches, and the burden would be more equally distributed and more easily borne by the congregation. Possibly these people give in proportion to the use they make of the church and the services of the clergy. Their presence at the altar, at sermons, and at other devout exercises, is about as rare as the jingle—they never give a bill—of their coins in the contribution basket. If dependence for the upkeeping of the church had to be placed upon their generosity, and for its spiritual progress on their practice, we should be without churches and schools.

Thank God, however, the vast majority of our Catholic people know their duty in this regard, and they comply with it generously. This is especially true of our ordinary, hard-working Catholic, who gives unstintingly and cheerfully. The men and women who toil from dawn till dusk, whom daily fatigue has taught the value of money, are those who give of their hard earnings to build up the Church of God, and who willingly support those who labor for their soul's salvation. It is due to their generous self-sacrifice that we have a roof over our heads, a school for our children and a church for Him whose joy it is to tarry with the children of men, who will not permit a glass of cold water, given in His Name, to go unrewarded. These, too, are they who use our churches and who are found before the altar in their every sorrow and their every joy. It is the deep appreciation of the value of the Faith for themselves and their children, it is their love for the beauty of our Lord's earthly dwelling-place, which nerves them to the heroic sacrifices, which at times they make for God's Church and God's cause. Their reward will come to them in spiritual gifts, in the religious life of their dear ones, and in the supernatural peace of their souls.

A LAST FAREWELL

He steadfastly set His Face to go to Jerusalem.
St. Luke 9:51.

AFTER our Lord had paid the tribute money, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Sending His Disciples to the Sacred City first, He proceeded thither later to the Feast of Tabernacles. "After His brethren were gone up, then He went up to the Feast, not publicly, but as it were privately, and rising up He departed from Galilee."

As far as we can judge from the Gospel our Lord never again in His mortal life returned to Galilee. Most of His public life had been spent within its borders, on its hills, in its valleys and by the Lakeshore. Few indeed, from the Jordan valley to the distant blue sea, were the hamlets and villages which He had not entered and where he had not by His healing touch left behind Him evidences of His power, sympathy and love.

Along the slopes of the Galilean hills and by the white shore of the lake, at Naim, Cana and Thabor and within the confines of the vil-

lages sightless eyes had been touched into life, deaf ears had heard in wonder for the first time the music of a mother's voice. His power and kindness had restored to soundness the festering bodies of corrupting lepers; even the dead had obeyed His command, and the tears of the widowed mother had been wiped away.

His work now in Galilee was over. His task there was done. He had preached there the doctrines of the Kingdom for the last time. The final months of His life He was to spend in Judea, striving especially for the souls of those to whom were committed the destinies of the nation and the people. How many memories must have crowded in upon Him as He looked out for the last time that beautiful autumn day on the calm surface of the quiet lake! Not long ago in the desert place on the northern shore He had fed the multitude, and in gratitude they wished to make Him king. He had walked out upon those quiet waters when they were seething and raging during the dark night of the storm, and His word had hushed them into silence and they sank into tranquility. When He stands on that shore again it will be at the dawn; the great battle will have been fought and won,

the great sacrifice will have been offered and He will be the august High Priest, anointed with His Blood.

He leaves Capharnaum never to enter it again—Capharnaum which had been the home of His manhood. When they cast Him out from Nazareth He found a home there on the shore of Genesareth's waters. Youth, obscurity, privacy had been left behind and at Capharnaum His public life began. Thither He came in His prime and in all the beauty and vigor of His full manhood. There by the sea His Disciples had loyally gathered around Him, and He had called them to be fishers of men. He had called them from the hard nightly toil on the waters of the lake to the harder toil of laboring for souls. It was at Capharnaum that these simple men had left all to cast in their lot with Him and to follow their Master. This scene of so many tender memories He was leaving now for the last time.

Journeying over the plain of Esdraelon, Thabor looms up in the distance and recalls to His mind the glory which but a few weeks ago manifested itself in the darkness of the night on the Mount when "His Face did shine as the sun and His garments became white as

snow." At the foot of that holy hill, to the twisted, writhing, possessed boy He gave life and peace, and to the father of the child comfort, happiness, and a healed son.

In the distance to the west is Nazareth which more than two years ago had rejected Him and strove to cast Him forth; yet He had dwelt there from infancy to the full years of His grown manhood. Thither from Egypt He had sped in the morning of His childhood when Heaven had assured His parents that they could leave their exile. Nazareth was really His first permanent earthly home. Into that home of wondrous interest over which broods the silence of Holy Writ we may not enter; but what memories of dear, bygone years must have been awakened in the mind of our Blessed Saviour as He saw Nazareth for the last time in the distance! Home did not mean for Him the modest cottage clinging to the hillside in which Mary and Joseph had dwelt with Him, but it meant the warm love that linked together those pure hearts so tenderly attached to each other. It meant years of prayer, of toil and of unselfishness that joined those holy lives together like a strong, sweet melody throbbing harmoniously.

On those hills to the west as a boy He had

wandered and prayed. In the village carpenter shop He had toiled, and beneath the roof of the humble cottage He had lisped His prayers at Mary's knee, and out from that home three years ago He had gone never again to return. With these and other holy thoughts, as Nazareth fades from view, our Lord moved on over the plain towards the Holy City.

His work in Galilee was now over, and what remained of His active career was to be spent almost entirely in Judea. The scene of His apostolic activity was now to be transferred from the remote provinces to Judea, the principal province of our Lord's native land.

Our Blessed Saviour must have loved Judea; for it was among those hills, on Bethlehem's slopes, that His Mother brought forth her first-born and laid Him wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. Judea and not Nazareth would have been the home of His early childhood, had not Joseph feared the son of Herod. "But Joseph seeing that Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither and being warned in sleep he returned into the parts of Galilee."

Judea was, of course, of far more importance than Galilee. It was the dwelling place of the great rulers of the nation, and included

above all the sacred city of Jerusalem, in which was the holy Temple. In that Temple the worship of the one true God was carried on by rite and ceremony which had every divine sanction and command. On its altars were offered sacrifices which prefigured the great Sacrifice of the New Dispensation. In the Temple were preserved most carefully the sacred traditions of the people. On that holy Mount Scribes taught and Priests prayed with and for the people and offered up the holy rites, so dear to the nation and to God Himself.

It would seem then that the natural place for the ministry of a prophet, of a great spiritual leader, the natural place to begin the religious movement which our Lord was to inaugurate, would be the sacred city. If He was approved of there, little difficulty would be found in obtaining approval in the distant localities. If the Priests gave their sanction in Judea, Priests in other places would take their cue from them. Success in Judea and in the Holy City meant success elsewhere. Failure in Jerusalem meant failure in the provinces.

Hitherto our Lord had come to Judea, and to the Holy City, but He had not resided there permanently as He had resided in Galilee and

at Capharnaum. He had not made Judea the scene of His apostolic labors to the same extent that He had toiled in the distant provinces beside the lake, nor had He manifested His power with the same prodigality that He had shown in Galilee. This preference for the provinces was due, we are told by commentators, to motives of sympathy and forbearance on the part of our Lord. When He appeared in Judea at the first Passover He at once came into conflict with the rulers and the Priests of the Temple, and although St. John tells us that "many believed in His name, seeing His miracles which He did, Jesus did not trust Himself to them." Again, at this time, even a man of Nicodemus's position and authority did not dare to approach our Lord openly. "And there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night." When our Lord next came to the sacred city, probably a year later, He cured a man at the pool who had been sick of the palsy for thirty-eight years. St. John tells us: "Thereupon the Jews persecuted Him because He did these things on the Sabbath, but Jesus answered them, 'My Father worketh until now and I work.' Hereupon the Jews sought the more to kill Him."

It is clear then that our Lord's presence in the sacred city was a signal for an outburst of opposition, was the occasion of plotting and conspiracy, was the cause of the growth of jealousy and hatred. His presence brought on an increase of malice and sin on the part of His enemies, and it was to prevent such dangers to their souls and to hinder the commission of such sins that we may suppose our Lord remained away from Jerusalem. But now the last six months of His life had come and He felt that He must carry on His ministry among them and thus give them the last call, which we know, alas, they rejected. It was only after this final sojourn among them, this supreme effort for their conversion, that blinded by their passions they succeeded in their evil designs and compassed His death.

What an example this consideration offers us of kindness for our neighbor! The Jews were blinded by their hatred; the leaders shut their eyes to the light and hardened their hearts to His appeals; they thirsted for His Blood. Jealousy, avarice, ambition, hatred, and other motives equally unworthy actuated them, yet our Blessed Lord rather than irritate them, rather than be an occasion of sin to them preferred to work in distant and un-

known Galilee until the time came to go to the ill-fated city and give it its last opportunity. But during those years He was praying and yearning for Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not."

It is thus in the Sacrament of the altar. He is hidden in His Tabernacle, and though men reject Him, and sin against Him, even though His friends treat Him coldly and indelicately, as they would never treat an earthly friend; yet He is ever longing and yearning for their spiritual welfare, and His graces are flowing daily in abundance from the Tabernacle into their souls. He is there striving to draw each and every one of us closer to His Sacred Heart, but alas, like the Jews, there are many who in their blindness, resist and stay away.

MALICE FOILED

Neither will I condemn thee. St. John 8:11.

AS we saw last month, our Lord left Capharnaum after His Apostles, and made His way in the crisp, chilly days of autumn, through Galilee and Samaria, to the Sacred City to be present at the Feast of Tabernacles. This festival was one of the greatest of the Jewish year. It was a commemoration and a thank-offering for the blessings bestowed upon the people of Israel during their sojourn and wanderings for forty years in the desert. Its celebration took place in the fall of the year when the harvests were ripe and the vintage gathered in, and was naturally a time of rejoicing and festivity. During the celebration tents were erected all about Jerusalem, and in these the pilgrims dwelt in memory of the dwelling of their forefathers in the tents out in the wilderness. The festival was all the more joyous from the fact that it immediately followed the awe-inspiring ceremonies of the Atonement, which were a solemn expiation for the sins of the people.

When the Disciples reached the Sacred City

without their Master, they were at once questioned by the multitude as to whether He was coming up to the Feast or not. Evidently the bands of pilgrims from Galilee—the scene of the Prophet's labors and miracles—had spoken of Him, and thus aroused the curiosity of the people, and no doubt the jealousy and hatred of the authorities. When, therefore, our Lord did not appear in Jerusalem there was widespread disappointment, and there followed among His friends and enemies considerable wrangling as to His mission and character. Some maintained that He was a "good man," others that He was a deceiver of the people. "The Jews, therefore, sought Him on the Festival Day, and said: 'Where is He?' And there was much murmuring among the multitude concerning Him. For some said, 'He is a good man.' And others said, 'No, but He seduceth the people.' Yet no man spoke openly of Him, for fear of the Jews."

Suddenly then in the midst of these murmurs and discussions, our Lord appeared unannounced in the Temple and began to preach. "Now, about the midst of the Feast, Jesus went up into the Temple, and taught. And the Jews wondered, saying: 'How doth this Man know letters, having never learned?'"

By what way He had come up to the Sacred City, or whether He had lingered in Jerusalem about the booths with the pious pilgrims, whether He had tarried perhaps at Bethany, where He was ever welcome, or had daily joined in the different ceremonies of devotion, we are not told.

For a time the multitude listened to His doctrine, and their opinion with regard to Him was divided. They wondered that one who was trained in the shop of a carpenter and knew no letters could speak so well. Some believed in Him, some maintained that He had a devil. The chief Priests and Pharisees, jealous of His growing popularity, seemed to egg on the multitude to wrangle with Him. Nicodemus who, as we know, two years earlier at our Lord's first visit to the Temple, had come to Him by night, pleaded our Blessed Saviour's cause, saying: "Doth our law judge any man unless it first hear him and know what he doth?" They answered, and said to him: "Art thou also a Galilean? Search the Scriptures and see that out of Galilee a prophet riseth not." "And every man returned to his own house and Jesus went unto Mount Olivet."

Whether our Lord passed the night on the

chilly, olive slopes of the mountain, or made His way to its eastern foot and accepted the hospitality of Lazarus and his sisters, is not told us, but "early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came to Him, and sitting down He taught them." As might be expected, our Lord would be early at the Temple, so as to be present at the sacrifices and the sacred ceremonies. These holy rites symbolical of most precious mysteries would be so dear to Him that He would not readily be absent. Then, too, no doubt, He would be anxious to teach without interruption the people who gathered in great numbers at the morning services, and He would be able to do so, at least for some time, without being disturbed by His enemies. But there was to be but little quiet and leisure for Him that day. Hardly had He begun the work of instructing His eager listeners when His enemies contrived a fresh plot against Him, and entered upon the scene to execute it.

During the Festival, when such immense throngs collected from all parts, there must have been considerable gaiety, dissipation and abandonment in the Sacred City. It was a time when large multitudes were gathered together and people dwelt round about Jerusa-

lem in tents and leafy booths, and not unnaturally there was more than usual license. Indeed, we know from history that at this time the morals of the Jews had considerably degenerated, and even the Pharisees and Priests, though striving for the letter of the law, were not free from great laxity, sensuality and hidden vices.

The detection in her guilt of an unfortunate woman during the night gave our Lord's enemies an opportunity of plotting and conspiring against Him. Suddenly, then, on the outskirts of the crowd there was a commotion and disturbance, and the Priests and Pharisees could be seen, their faces flushed, their eyes flashing with indignation, dragging an unfaithful woman to the feet of the Master. St. John pictures the scene: "And the Scribes and the Pharisees bring unto Him a woman taken in adultery, and they set her in the midst, and said to Him, 'Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now, Moses in the Law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest Thou?' And this they said tempting Him, that they might accuse Him." It was no zeal for the law that prompted the cruelty of Scribes and Pharisees. There was no need to drag the sinful woman into such

publicity and subject her to the torture of public exposure. It was cruel and must have pained the Heart of Christ deeply. To see this unhappy creature unveiled, disheveled, pushed into the very sacred precincts of the Temple and exposed to the curiosity of a very cold and critical mob, was foreign to every feeling of compassion in the Sacred Heart of Christ. It must have been a keen suffering to Him who is Infinite Tenderness to see such cruelty and hypocrisy, not from any zeal for the Law, not from any idea for the suppression of the vice from which her very accusers were not free, but from a cold, calculating spirit of hatred and envy against Himself.

The Jews must have known that the law of stoning for such an offence had long since fallen into desuetude, and even had it been in vogue, they were aware that the Roman authorities would not have permitted its execution. Our Lord read the thoughts of His enemies that morning in the Temple porch, and knew that they were striving to use the misfortune of the guilty creature as a snare for His undoing. So with a Heart filled with compassion, instead of answering them, He bent down and wrote silently in the sand. "When, therefore, they continued asking Him,

He lifted up Himself, and said to them: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' And again stooping down, He wrote on the ground." They little knew the Heart of Christ, they had never sounded its depths of tenderness and compassion if they expected from His lips on that morning a condemnation upon the sinful, but doubtless repentant, woman. Not that Christ did not condemn and hate sin; no human heart could hate and condemn it more; but far above His hatred was His compassion and spirit of forgiveness for the repenting woman.

His enemies knew the divine pity which dwelt in the Heart of Christ. He loved when others hated. He pardoned when others never forgave. He had a publican for an Apostle, and sat at table with sinners. If yielding to His reputed kindness He condoned the fault He would put Himself in opposition to the Law, and they would soon fling in His teeth the violation of the Mosaic dispensation. If on the other hand, He required that the Law should be carried out, if He were ruthless, proved false to His reputation and insisted that the poor unfortunate woman should be stoned to death outside the wall of the city, a feeling of opposition to Himself and His

teachings would be aroused in the minds and hearts of the multitude who rather sympathized with the sinner.

As His enemies stood before Him in all their cruelty and baseness, our Blessed Saviour escaped from their toils by bidding the one without sin to cast the first stone at her. "But they hearing this, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest." One by one they slunk away; one by one, disappointed, thwarted and angry, and hating Him more than ever before. Conscious of their secret sins, they made their way down the Temple steps, knowing that their motives had been detected, and perhaps their own hidden lives read.

"And Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus, lifting up Himself, said to her: 'Woman, where are they that accuse thee? Hath no man condemned thee?' Who said: 'No man, Lord.' And Jesus said: 'Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more!'" She, too, might have gone. Nothing would have been more natural than her flight from danger and escape from shame. But she felt that in the sacred presence of Him who had protected her, there would be pardon and forgiveness; and so, He bade her go and sin no more. How

little the Scribes and Pharisees knew the Heart of Christ!

They know little of that Divine Heart and have read to slight purpose the story of His life who picture Him as cold to sinners or unwilling to forgive. "God is love," says St. John, who had reclined on the Master's bosom; and such He was during the course of His mortal life. His very enemies charged Him with friendliness toward sinners whom He ever welcomed with words of tenderness, pardon and forgiveness. As He was then in days of old, as He was that crisp autumn morning in the Temple porch toward the sinful woman, that He is even now, "Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day, the same forever." Above all in the Tabernacle and in the confessional, in the Sacrament of His compassion, He is tender-hearted toward all who seek forgiveness, and will never add one word of reproval to the affliction of the repentant sinner. He will lift lovingly and gently its burden of sin and pour out instead the grace of His consoling love.

LIGHT TO DARKENED EYES

He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and I see.
St. John 9:15.

AFTER our Blessed Saviour, by pardoning the woman taken in sin, had foiled his enemies, He still further antagonized them by the character of His preaching in the Temple. So far, indeed, did they go in their hatred, that "they took up stones, therefore, to cast at Him. But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple."

Either immediately on His way out from the Temple after this disgraceful scene, or more probably on the following Sabbath, our Lord, following the promptings of His tender charity, performed another miracle, which, while it displayed His kindness, again brought Him into opposition with Priests and the rulers.

"And Jesus passing by, saw a man, who was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him: 'Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?'" Perhaps our Blessed Saviour had spent the night at the quiet home of Mary and

Martha and Lazarus in Bethany on the other side of the mountain. Possibly He had sat there far into the night looking out over the moonlit Jordan valley, telling them in tones never to be forgotten many of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Rising early the next morning and making His way over the zigzag path that gleamed under the morning sunlight through the fresh green fields, passing by Gethsemane and entering the eastern gate, He stops in the Temple porches before the poor blind beggar. Then it was that the Apostles asked Him whether it was the beggar's own sins or those of his parents that were the cause of his blindness. Into such useless speculations our Lord refused to be drawn, and told them that neither the sufferer's nor his parents' sins were the cause of the affliction, but that it was permitted that God's glory might be made manifest. "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

The story of the blind man was, no doubt, a sad one. From childhood his eyes had been dark, and he had never seen the light. His mother's voice he had often heard, her smooth face was familiar to his touch, the sound of

her footsteps was well known to him, and as welcome as the sweetest music to his ear, but he had never seen the sad look in her eyes or the frequent tear upon her cheeks. Many a time and oft the disappointed parents had whispered to each other their disappointment and their sorrow, but their quiet words had never fallen upon the keen ears of their blind child. For worlds they would not add a feather's weight to his burden already so heavy. With tenderness they had nursed him and watched him in all his growing years. Their affection was the greater because of his darkness and his helplessness. Perhaps in boyhood he had begun to come daily and take his post at the Temple and beg for what help charity and sympathy would give. He was familiar with the sound of the clinking of the copper coins that fell into the cup in his small, trembling hand, and when the worshipers were generous his heart was glad, for his lot would be easier because of their charity. But the kind words of sympathy that passed from human lips were a cause of more joy to that darkened soul than the shekels gathered in the darkness under the porches of the Temple.

The pitiful story in all its desolate details was, of course, well known to our Blessed

Saviour, and so His tender Heart was moved, and stopping before the blind man, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him: 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloe.'" Perhaps the blind man had heard of the Prophet of Galilee who had given sight to the poor sufferer in Decapolis. The rumor of that marvel of tenderness may have been brought him by the pilgrims from the up-country. Possibly they had gathered around about him in the intervals between the services in the Temple, and had told him how Jesus had led the man out of town and then touched his eyes and he saw. How the poor blind beggar would yearn that the Prophet might pass near him! How anxiously he must have awaited the coming of the Feast of Tabernacles, with the hope growing in his heart that the Prophet of Galilee would once more come to Jerusalem; and so, that morning when he felt the delicate fingers rubbing the clay upon his eyelids, though no one had told him it was the Galilean Prophet, his hope must have been strengthened that at last his eyes would be opened and he would see.

Doubtless some kind hand led the blind man to the pool of Siloe where, when he had

washed his eyes, he looked up and saw for the first time the marble columns of the Temple glistening under the morning sunlight. Such a miracle would naturally attract considerable attention and could not escape notice. "The neighbors, therefore, and they who had seen him before that he was a beggar, said: 'Is not this he that sat and begged?' Some said: 'This is he.' But others said: 'No, but he is like him.' But he said: 'I am he.' They said, therefore, to him: 'How were thy eyes opened?' He answered: 'That man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me: "Go to the pool of Siloe, and wash." And I went, I washed, and I see.' "

The open admission that Christ had healed him not only aroused the attention of the crowds, but gave rise to misgivings and questionings as to the character of Jesus who had cured the man on the Sabbath day. For a solution, therefore, of their doubts the man was brought to the rulers of the nation. "They bring him that had been born blind to the Pharisees. Now it was the Sabbath, when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Again, therefore, the Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. But he said to them: 'He put clay upon my eyes and I washed and

I see.'" Then followed the dispute in which the Pharisees maintained that this man was not of God because He "keepeth not the Sabbath." But the people maintained that one who wrought such miracles could not be a sinner. The parents of the blind man were sent for and the Jews asked them: "Is this your son who you say was born blind? How then doth he now see?" His parents answered them, and said: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind, but how he now seeth we know not or who hath opened his eyes, we know not; ask him, he is of age, let him speak for himself." Evidently the parents were afraid to acknowledge the miracle, but they did not and could not deny the fact that the healed man was their own son. They were timid because the danger was great, for they knew that "the Jews had already agreed among themselves that if any man should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore did his parents say, 'He is of age, ask him.'"

The blind man was, therefore, again summoned to explain, but so great was his gratitude, so stout his faith and strong his belief that no questionings and no threats, no quibblings about the sanctity of the Sabbath could

move him from the belief that our Lord was no sinner, but a Prophet. He maintained stoutly that "unless this man were of God He could not do anything." Unless God were with Him, He could not with the common dust from the Temple pavement have given sight to blind eyes. "They answered, and said to him: 'Thou wast wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us?' And they cast him out."

When our Lord had heard of the persecution by the Pharisees and the loyalty of the blind man, He sought and found him. "He said to him: 'Dost thou believe in the Son of God?' He answered and said: 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' And Jesus said to him: 'Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.' And he said: 'I believe, Lord.' And falling down he adored Him." Our Lord had not only given to the blind man the sight of his mortal eyes, but he had opened the eyes of his soul. To look for the first time into the face of father and mother, into the eyes of those who for years had been kind to him, to see the play of the sunshine on the gleaming Temple, on Mount Moriah, and to watch the shadows at eventide creep up the western slope of the Mount of Olives, all these and other wonders that met

his startled new-born sight were indeed a singular favor and pleasure. But what were these favors compared to the spiritual wonders that broke in upon the strengthened and re-created vision of his soul? What were they in comparison with the knowledge that Christ was the Eternal Son, which he, for the first time, believed when "falling down he adored Him"?

One often wonders at the slight appreciation found among some Catholics of the great gift of spiritual sight, the great gift of Faith. That at times little store is placed on this great blessing is clear from the dangerous literature found in the homes of those to whom the Faith should be of the utmost value. In many of the books and magazines there is found a poison that will, if indulged in, bring on insidiously, little by little, a spiritual blindness that will make the eyes of the soul darker to the truths of the supernatural world than were the eyes of the poor blind man at the Temple before Jesus opened them to the sight of the slopes of Mt. Olivet. How little price is set upon this spiritual vision of truth by those who send their little children to non-Catholic schools, where their Faith is either ignored or despised or calumniated, where their young

minds are led on step by step toward the twilight of doubt into the darkness of unbelief! How little they think of this spiritual gift for themselves and for their children who contract mixed marriages, in which common experience teaches that the Faith is commonly blurred, weakened and often lost! Yet it were ten thousand times better that the eyes of the body should be closed and shut to the light of the noon-day sun than that one jot or tittle of the Faith should be weakened or lost. Alas, how slightly this Faith is valued, how little it is appreciated by many whose fathers and mothers suffered so much to preserve it and hand it on intact to us, their children!

THE PRICELESS PEARL

The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save. St. Luke 9:56.

AFTER the cure of the man born blind our Lord rebuked the Pharisees who, while claiming for themselves exclusively spiritual sight, were stumbling in the darkness of their pride and wilful error. They were the leaders and guides of the people, whose duty it was to point the way, so our Lord in the parable that immediately fell from His lips drew a picture of the Good Shepherd and the hireling which clearly painted what they were as well as what they ought to be.

He told them: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth, and the wolf catcheth, and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep." These words fell upon deaf ears, like the seed upon barren and stony soil. Their minds were closed against the light, their hearts were too

hard to feel so delicate a touch. None are so deaf as those who do not wish to hear.

"A dissension rose again among the Jews for these words. And many of them said, 'He hath a devil, and is mad, why hear you Him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of one that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?'" Thus it was that the Feast of Tabernacles came to a close. Apparently little fruit had been produced in the hearts of the Pharisees; our Lord's preaching and miracles seem only to have embittered His enemies the more and to have put His life in greater danger; and so, for a short time our Lord left Judea. It seems probable that He made His way back through Samaria into Galilee, where He remained only a few days, possibly collecting the seventy-two disciples whom later He sent before Him into Judea.

"And it came to pass when the days of His assumption were accomplished that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." He was now about to enter upon the last period of His preaching. His work in Galilee was over. There, where He had labored patiently, He would be seen no more, and now for the last time "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

The fact that His recent visit to the Sacred City had been so fruitless, and had aroused so much opposition, and had even put His life in jeopardy had no influence upon His apostolic zeal save to make Him the more eager to go up to the Sacred City, and in the face of antagonism and danger to give Jerusalem the last opportunity of receiving the Gospel. This example of apostolic courage would be needed later on in the days of stress and strain, when the Apostles would be required to preach His doctrine in spite of threats, hatred and death.

"And He sent messengers before His face, and going they entered into a city of the Samaritans to prepare for Him." The inhabitants of Samaria refused to receive our Blessed Lord. He had just left Galilee, never to return, and now when He asks for hospitality in Samaria, it is refused. Perhaps the memory of the cold, bleak evening, nearly thirty-three years ago, came back to Him when His Mother sought shelter for Him in the little hillside hamlet of the city of Judea, "and there was no room for them in the inn," and His Mother was sent out to the cold chalk-hill cave where He was born.

Over two years ago, very early in His ministry, when at the well of Jacob He had

converted the Samaritan woman, the Samaritans had asked Him to tarry with them. "When the Samaritans were come to Him they desired that He would tarry there, and He abode there two days and many more believed in Him because of His word." Now all was changed. They rejected Him and closed the doors of their city in His face. Had His footsteps been directed toward their holy mountain Gerizim and not toward Mount Moriah and its Temple all would have been different. They would have received Him joyfully and have made Him welcome, but "they received Him not because His face was of one going to Jerusalem."

This refusal to give hospitality to their Master aroused the indignation of James and John. They said: "Lord, wilt Thou not command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" No doubt, there was in the minds of the two angry Apostles a thought of those earlier days when the Prophet Elias, among the hills of Samaria, had drawn down fire from heaven by his prayer upon the soldiers sent by Ochozias to take him before the king, because he had foretold the King's death. In this event, possibly they found a justification of their prayer for the punishment

of the Samaritans who were rejecting their Master. But we can readily believe that ignorant refusal of hospitality would not, in the mind of our kind and merciful Saviour, merit so summary a punishment. The Dispensation of love, not of fear, had begun.

"And turning He rebuked them, saying, 'You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save.'" Our Lord did not mean, when He told His Apostles that they did not know by what spirit they were led, that they were under the influence or the suggestion of the evil spirit. He meant, rather, that they were actuated by the spirit of the Old Law. Its spirit was one of threats of punishment, of fear, but that spirit was passing away and giving place to the spirit of the new Dispensation, of the Gospel. This was to be a reign of meekness, of gentleness and love. The thunders of Mount Sinai were to be replaced by the loving pleadings of the dying Saviour on Mount Calvary. The inclination of the Heart of Christ toward the Samaritans who had rejected Him was not to call down fire from heaven upon them, but rather to strive by every solicitation that love and tenderness could suggest to lead them to the light of

God's truth. The reason, too, is not far to seek, and He at once makes it known to us.

"The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save." These words contained the whole end and purpose of our Lord's mission, the whole object of His tarrying with the children of men. He came not to destroy, but to save; not to cast down, but to lift up; not to punish, but to reward; not to chastise, but to soothe and comfort. It was for this that He was born and was laid on the yellow straw in the manger on the first Christmas night. It was to win souls that He toiled during all His up-growing years among the hills of Nazareth, and during the three busy years of His public life. Whether He preached within sound of the waves of the sea or upon the rounded hills in Galilee, whether He lingered beyond the reed-lined Jordan in Peræa, or dwelt for a time in the quiet home at the foot of Mount Olivet in Bethany, or whether He preached from the white marble steps of the Temple, under the scornful gaze of Scribe and Pharisee, the one thought in His mind, the one desire in His Sacred Heart was to win and not to destroy souls.

Possibly, too, as He was about to send the seventy-two forth to prepare the way before

Him in the towns and villages, He may have wished to impress this lesson upon their minds, so that they, too, might keep before their mind this divine aim in their apostolic work. Then, also, He was beginning His last public preaching in Judea; it was to be a ministry fraught with no little danger and attended by constant opposition, and He would doubtless impress upon His Apostles that the one motive that must buoy them up in their future labors for Him, no matter how great the danger, no matter how marked the opposition, must be their love and eagerness to win souls.

How important this lesson today! In many homes it is sadly needed; homes in which the spirit of worldiness reigns and where the social ambitions of parents are endangering the spiritual welfare of the children; homes where the body is pampered and the soul is starved; homes where parents curse and never pray; homes where parents neglect Mass and the Sacraments, criticise the Church and her ministers, send their children to non-Catholic schools and encourage them to frequent non-Catholic society, with a view to certain supposed social advantages—in all such homes there is little effort made to save souls, but the tendency is toward their ruin.

Nothing can compensate for the loss of a soul. It cost the last drop of our Lord's Precious Blood upon the Cross. All else in comparison sinks into insignificance and dwindles away into nothingness. "What will one give in exchange for his soul?" The soul saved, all is saved; if lost, everything is lost. Salvation attained, all is attained. If we fail in that aim, all life—no matter what its apparent success—is an utter failure. All life's joys, all life's glory, all life's pleasures are, unless salvation is secured, as fleeting as shadows, as unreal as dreams, and leave but regret and dark despair in the human heart. The one thing real in this world, the one thing that counts, the one thing of lasting and vital importance is to save our souls. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

Yes, we shall not only labor for our own salvation, but we shall toil and spend ourselves for the souls of others, for these cost the Blood of our Blessed Saviour, and for them His Sacred Heart yearns. We surely will try to satisfy that yearning by our prayers, by our words, by our influence, and above all by our example.

THE CRY OF WARNING

Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida!
ST. LUKE 10:13.

AFTER His rejection by the Samaritans our Lord sent the seventy-two Disciples before Him upon their apostolic ministry to the towns and villages through which He was to pass. "After these things the Lord appointed also other seventy-two, and He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He, Himself, was come."

"His face was set towards Jerusalem," and the time of His active work was daily growing shorter. The dark, blood-stained vision of Calvary was every hour distinct before His mind; and so, His Sacred Heart was more eager that all should hear the word, see the light and listen to the call. The night was coming when no man could work. Hourly the opposition of His enemies was intensifying. The plots laid for His ensnaring were thickening and their final apparent triumph could not long be delayed; so our Lord multiplied Himself, as it were, in the seventy-two whom

He sent forth to prepare souls for His last visit to them before the end.

To the Disciples going forth on their mission He gave a message that we can dwell upon with profit. "Yet know this," He said, "that the Kingdom of God is at hand." "I say to you, it shall be more tolerable at that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes, but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment, than for you. And thou, Capharnaum, which are exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell." This was His message. It seems to point to a shadow of sorrow hanging over the last days of our Lord's tarrying with the children of men, and it contained for the Jews, and should contain for us, a solemn warning.

His mind seemed to be reverting to the years of His ministry that were over. His own native town, the little mountain village, had cast Him out and knew Him no more. In the midst of them He had stood with graces streaming from His hands and they would

have none of them; they bade Him depart. Judea, where He had preached and toiled, Judea in which was the capital of His nation, had thrust Him out, and on the very steps of the sacred Temple had taken up stones to hurl at Him and bade Him go forth as a hated, hunted animal. Within its walls there was for Him no hospitality, no welcome. Within the consecrated precincts of God's holy house, His Father's house, there was no room for Him, the Father's beloved Son.

In the Lake country where He had dwelt so long, where He had lavished such evidences of tenderness and mercy, one section had come to Him in an official delegation, had come to Him in a representative character and had asked Him to depart from them and to leave their territory. In return for acts of kindness and love they begged Him to go out from among them and leave them in peace. On the other side of the Lake they had conspired and plotted against Him, had schemed among themselves so as to frighten Him into flight. All these incidents which betrayed their rejection happened on the very shore of the Lake where the blind had been led to Him, and He had given them sight; where the deaf had been made to listen with wonder and en-

raptured soul to the sweet music of laughing waters; where the lepers at His word and by the loving power of His healing hand had been cleansed and purified; and yet, with a blindness darker than a starless night over the waters, they cast Him forth.

Surely these dark memories of rejected graces must have hung over His saddened soul as He sent forth the chosen seventy-two and told them to warn the villages not to refuse His teaching, but to listen to His voice. "Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell." Such was the threat which came to the lips of the gentle, meek Saviour, sending His Disciples to preach in preparation for His coming. What memories must have flooded His saintly soul at this terrible utterance! Corozain! Bethsaida! Capharnaum! Loved cities, lying on the sandy slopes of the silvery lake! Cities in which He had often lingered, and through which with His Apostles He had often passed, scattering words of love and deeds of mercy, as the seed was scattered by the sower in springtime on the hilly slopes! Cities, which had heard the call of that compelling voice, yet had not listened, which had

seen the beauty of His sanctity and had preferred the whited sepulchres of Pharisaic formalism! They had listened to the new Commandments on the Mount of the Beatitudes, had drunk in the teaching of the parables and the code of the New Dispensation of the law of love, and they would rather the narrow traditions and the killing letter of a dead law. Offered light they chose darkness; they ate ashes rather than the bread eternal. When life was within their grasp, they reached out for death.

As our Lord looked back through the ages He saw how God in His anger had chastised Nineve and Babylon, how His wrath had fallen upon Tyre and Sidon, how Sodom and Gomorrha had been swept from the plain and buried in the salt sea, yet these would have done penance in sack-cloth and ashes had they witnessed in their streets the marvels of tenderness and power which had been wrought so unavailingly in Corozain, Bethsaida, and His loved Capharnaum.

Woe to these towns of His native land! How He brooded over them with affection as He saw them in spirit and yearned for their conversion! How He longed for their coming from the darkness into the light! How

eagerly He prayed that they would turn from their sins to Him, the fountain of pardon and forgiveness! The loved Lake, rich with myriad memories of His life glittered in the sunlight, mirroring the pictures of the towns of His predilection. The birds flew from their house-tops out over the laughing waters. The water-fowls sported and played in the snowy foam on the beach; the traffic went on as usual in their busy streets. The ripening wheat on the hillside and the straight rows of rich young corn were kissed by the slanting rays of the setting sun. All was peace and quiet in that vision, yet in the distance our Blessed Saviour saw the dark spot, small and black, on the horizon, that was to grow, deepen and thicken, and finally to break with one wild shriek of anger, and burst, and strike with killing force, when woe would come upon Corozain, Bethsaida, and Capharnaum, and the cities of the Lake would be no more. Such was the picture painted by our Saviour as He bade the seventy-two go forth on their mission.

Is it an exaggeration to say that the same message is sent to us? Are not our graces more numerous, more precious a thousandfold than those given in days of old to the cities

on Genesareth's shore? It is true our Lord walked their streets in mortal garb and human form. They looked into His face, heard His voice and saw the marvels that teemed from His hands, yet we, by the gift of faith, can see far more and greater spiritual wonders and evidences of love and affection. We have the same loving Master with us daily on our altars, just as truly as He was on the streets of Capharnaum and Bethsaida. He pleads with us for our service as earnestly and looks for our love as ardently, as He did in days that are gone for the hearts of the rugged fishermen by Tiberias's waters. Woe to us, then, if we turn a deaf ear to His call, and close our eyes to the light and harden our hearts to His pleadings!

What graces the children of the Church have in their possession: security in our faith through her teachings, strength in our weakness through her Sacraments, pardon from our guilt through her Confession! Yet how we court danger to the faith by mixed marriages, by the frequentation of non-Catholic schools by our children! What spiritual blindness grows upon us through our reading of dangerous books and papers! How deeply spiritual apathy and disease eat into our lives by the

neglect of the Sacraments! How Catholic principles are dulled and blunted and Catholic practice stifled and Catholic life killed by our worldliness, selfishness and neglect of prayer! And yet all the time, through every hour of the day and night the Sacred Heart is yearning and longing for our poor, weary, tired souls. We are starving and we will not eat.

How long shall it be before we hear the whisper of that voice sobbing into our spirits: "Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! Woe to thee, Capharnaum!" We surely have been exalted by our spiritual privileges, we might even be called the spoiled children of the Sacred Heart; yet if we neglect our opportunities, reject the proffered graces, harden our hearts to the whisperings of the spirit of God, the day for the judgment may come as it came upon the dead towns by the lakeshore. It is hard to think that, if our gifts and privileges had been bestowed upon those not of the household of the Faith, they would not have corresponded and yielded to the call. Let us by our love and our loyalty, by our unworldliness and unselfishness, by our spirit of prayer and devotion to the Sacraments bring it about that this woe, called down on Capharnaum and Bethsaida, be not our lot.

A SILENT WORSHIPPER

Mary, sitting at the Lord's feet, heard His word.
St. Luke 10:39.

THE next incident told us by St. Luke, which occurred during his Judean ministry, was our Lord's visit to Bethany. "Now it came to pass as they went, that He entered into a certain town, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who was sitting also at the Lord's feet, and heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: 'Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me.' And the Lord answering, said to her: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things! But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.'"

After Nazareth, where our Blessed Saviour had dwelt so long with His mother, and perhaps Capharnaum, where she had often tarried with Him during His public life, no place was as loved by the Sacred Heart as the little hill-

side village of Bethany. It was the home of His friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus. This small hamlet, so dear to Him, hallowed by many visits, and especially by the memories of the last days of His life, was situated among the uplands at the eastern foot of Mount Olivet, whose summit completely hid it from Jerusalem. Next to Nazareth and Capharnaum we might call it His home. For thither our Lord's footsteps were often turned, and there He frequently dwelt. To that sad cottage He had brought joy when the wayward sister, at His bidding, returned cleansed and purified. In a few months, when death would enter that peaceful home, and the strong brother, Lazarus, would lie dead in the dark grave on the hillside, the Master would come and change tears to smiles by giving back that loved brother to his sorrowing sisters.

Often during His ministry He had been welcomed to that hearth. In His triumphs and in His joys He found there loving hearts to rejoice with Him. In His hours of trouble and sorrow those tried and true friends never failed in affectionate sympathy. In this home of His loving friends He was never without a resting place. Here had ever reigned unselfishness and love and a warm welcome for the

Master when He condescended to linger under its roof. For our Saviour then there clustered around this hillside cottage some of the sweetest and most sacred memories of His public life.

Thither, toward the end of His Judean ministry, He turned His footsteps. He will not often visit that sacred abode again. Once more He will dwell there in the days before His Passion, and then those loved friends will see Him cross their doorstep never again. He will come in those dark days of death and sorrow to bring them comfort and life and then pass for the last time out over the mountain to meet His own great sorrow and to offer up the sacrifice of His life. But even in that awful hour of suffering Mary, Martha's sister, will stand with His own Mother at the foot of the cross.

Our Lord had been toiling through the valleys and among the hills of Judea. Possibly He and His Apostles were weary and in need of rest. During those closing months of His sacred ministry we can be certain that He redoubled His efforts to reach the hearts of those for whose enlightening He was making a final effort. Perhaps, then, as the shadows of Olivet were lengthening over the valley, one evening

our Blessed Saviour and His companions made their way to that loved home, seeking quiet and refreshment. That His visit was welcome is evident from the Gospel: "She had a sister called Mary who sitting at His feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving."

Mary evidently would gladly entertain the Master and act as willing hostess, while Martha hastened with all the loving energy so marked in her to prepare a generous repast which would be worthy of her Guest and expressive of her joy at His coming to her home. "Martha was busy about much serving. And she stood and said: 'Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister is leaving me to serve alone? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me.'" Martha, absorbed and eager in her preparation for our Lord's fitting reception failed to realize that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." For a time she forgot the superiority of the food of the soul over that of the body. For the instant she lost sight of the fact that prayer and union with our Lord are above labor and temporal and external activities. The things of the spirit are of more moment than meat and drink. And so

"the Lord, answering said to her: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.' "

Our Lord here did not wish to condemn active labor done in His service. He, Himself, had trained His Apostles for the arduous toils of their future busy ministry. He was at this time in the very midst of constant and persevering work to bring the Jews to the knowledge of the truth. He had said that the laborers were few,and the harvest was great and ripe for the reaping; but He wished to discourage all spirit of fret, trouble and anxiety in the labors of His servants. He wished to correct the spirit of excessive activity of Martha, who thought perhaps but little of the life-giving words that were falling from His lips upon the soul of her attentive sister.

"Mary sat at His feet, hearing the word." It was at His feet in Galilee that Mary had found pardon and forgiveness after her years of wandering and her life of waywardness. These sacred feet in other days she had bathed with her tears and dried with her luxuriant hair. In a few months, heart-broken with

grief, she will again fall at His feet, and clasping them with her hands will look up into His face through tear-filled eyes and whisper: "O Master, had You been here, my brother had not died." At these sacred feet, beside the Blessed Mother, for three long hours she will stand beneath the Cross and watch that loving life bleeding away for the pardon of His enemies. On Easter morning it will be at these feet that she will hear His voice, sweeter than all earthly music, whispering her name and calling her "Mary"; and so, we can not be surprised that when our Lord visited that quiet home by the hillside, "Mary, sitting at His feet, heard His word."

Spiritual writers find in Martha and Mary types of two kinds of spirits that have ever existed and characterized the Church, those given especially to prayer and those devoted to active works. Mary sitting at the feet of our Lord represents the contemplative spirit. She portrays the life of those holy souls who, leaving all for Christ, devote themselves to perpetual prayer and union with God. Their days are spent in holy meditation and in long hours before the altar under the sanctuary lamp.

Sometimes even Catholics fail to appreciate

this sublime self-sacrificing call. The life of activity, of labor, a life devoted to teaching or corporal works of mercy they can understand; but how often we hear the contemplative orders, religious communities devoted especially to prayer, spoken of without sufficient appreciation! Yet how false this view! Even the most strenuous activity, the most arduous labors, the most unremitting toil are powerless for the salvation of souls unless vivified and lifted up by the power of prayer. Without prayer such efforts become merely human means for the accomplishment of a divine purpose for which the Blood of Christ was required. Without prayer such endeavors and strivings are but "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals." Without prayer they are a body without a soul. They are the electric wire without the current. Toilers in active fields of spiritual endeavor without prayer are not only powerless; their own salvation is not secure. Even St. Paul feared, lest for want of the interior spirit he himself might "become a castaway." Mere natural activity, acquired talent and human endeavor never yet saved a soul.

We are told of the Blessed Mother that she kept all His sayings in her heart and, ponder-

ing, uttered them in the prolonged *Magnificat* of her life of praise. So thousands of souls all down through the ages of the Church have sat at His feet before the Tabernacle throughout their lives, and have been a power in the kingdom of God for the salvation of men. It is the prayer of these holy souls that strengthens the arms and stoutens the heart of the busy, active toilers. It is the lives of those sitting at His feet and hearing the word which bring light to myriads of darkened souls, courage to thousands of cowardly spirits, and which draw down God's blessings and graces in uncounted ways into millions of human hearts. It is the noble, hidden, prayerful lives of these brave men and women that keep back the anger of a just God from wreaking vengeance upon an ungrateful and sinful world. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

A CRY FROM A LOVING HEART

"Our Father, who art in Heaven." St. Matthew 6:9.

"AND it came to pass, that as He was in a certain place praying, when He ceased, one of His Disciples said to Him: 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' "

We can not be certain of the order of the events at this period in our Lord's public life. It is not improbable, however, that He gave at this time this instruction on prayer as narrated by St. Luke. When our Lord sanctioned the prudent choice of Mary by telling her sister, "Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her," He showed his esteem for prayer. Possibly, also, at this time He was followed about among the hills of Bethany by the large throngs, that were wont to avail themselves of His preaching, and were eager to hear His teaching. Not unlikely many there had heard the fiery words of the Baptist in the days of his ministry, and thus grace had been stirred in their souls, so that when our Lord came into these same southern districts to preach the Gospel they

were most anxious to hear Him. Trained more or less by His precursor, the crowd would be prepared to listen with profit to our Blessed Saviour's instructions.

Our Lord, then, in answer to the request of His Disciples to teach them to pray, "as John also taught his disciples," gives utterance to the Lord's Prayer, though in a somewhat shorter form than He had taught it earlier on the hills in Galilee, in the Sermon on the Mount. How dear this sublime prayer should be to us! With what reverence and loving memories we should recite it! Never had it been heard on earth, till it was uttered by our Blessed Saviour's lips. It first ascended to the throne of the Heavenly Father from the depths of the Sacred Heart of His beloved Son, and its utterance was freighted with all the warm love of that Divine Heart. Surely, this prayer, taught by our Lord Himself, and containing, as it does, petitions for all our needs of soul and body, embracing sentiments most glorious to the Divine Majesty, ought to have an important place in our spiritual life. Yet, perhaps, there is no more common complaint from souls eager to serve God generously and anxious to keep in touch with the supernatural world than their inability to pray. This com-

plaint is so frequent and the distress to devoted souls so painful, that it may be well to dwell a little on the subject of prayer.

Many find themselves quite equal to any kind of zealous work in our Lord's service. Many experience no difficulty in exercising spiritual activity. They are willing to sacrifice time and also money in the promotion of good works, and are willing and glad to endure labor and fatigue; but when there is question of prayer and spiritual exercises they are dumb and helpless: devotions are tiresome, spiritual duties are distasteful and performed without relish. Yet in this matter they are often distressed and blame themselves when they are not at all, or very little, at fault. Indeed, the exercises of which they complain are often very meritorious and pleasing to God.

The difficulty in prayer, and no one denies that it is difficult to pray, often comes not from ourselves, but from the nature of prayer itself. Just what is it that is expected of us when we pray? What does God look for when we are on our knees? What does He want from us when the beads slip slowly through our fingers, or we kneel under the light of the sanctuary lamp? What does He require when we attend Holy Mass, or receive Communion?

Does our Lord expect that at prayer our minds will not wander, our thoughts not be distracted and that our imagination will be under perfect control? Does our Lord intend that we should with facility and ease be able to lift up our hearts and minds to Him? If our Blessed Saviour looked for any such result as this in our lives, then He would have made us on quite different lines than those upon which our lives have been built. Since our nature has been wounded by the sin of Adam, no such control over our thoughts, no such mastery over our imagination and feelings is readily possible. Our thoughts will wander, distractions will present themselves, and our imagination will stray despite our best efforts.

Whatever comes naturally to us we can do easily and without effort. Whatever is congenial can generally be done readily and with pleasure. Those in good health have no difficulty, for example, in eating when hungry, and in resting when fatigued. The reading of an interesting book or conversation with a friend is pleasant and requires no effort. These and other actions naturally congenial can be done quietly, easily and without pain or endeavor; but prayer is not natural, it is supernatural. It is not along the lines of our inclinations, but

rather opposed to them. Prayer, which is the raising of the heart and mind to God, does not come easily and with pleasure, as does the reading of a book or the playing of a game, or a stroll with a loved friend. When engaged in it we are like a man out of his natural element, outside his usual environment, in strange and unusual surroundings. We are, in a way, like men who climb a very high mountain and at its summit reach a very rarefied atmosphere; at that elevation they find it difficult even to breathe. When we undertake to pray, we enter a spiritual atmosphere. Our ordinary surroundings are dense, heavy, earthy, and when we try to lift our souls to the higher altitude of prayer, to raise ourselves into spiritual surroundings not natural and congenial to us, then to live and breathe spiritually requires serious efforts, if we are to succeed. In prayer we are to lift our hearts and minds to God. We are to raise ourselves in thought and affection from our gross material atmosphere into the spiritual world, and to spiritualize our lives so that the life of faith becomes, as it were, almost natural to us. Surely, this is no easy task, no slight difficulty; it requires a considerable struggle.

Evidently, then, what our Lord wants from

us in our devotions is not so much the perfect prayer in itself, for no matter how perfect the prayer, it will ever be infinitely below His worthiness, as were even the prayers of the Blessed Mother of God, herself. What God really desires from us, what He looks for, when we bend the knee, is that we should strive and make efforts to lift ourselves into this supernatural environment. What pleases Him is that struggle to fix our minds and our affections upon holy truths and sacred mysteries, and endeavor to work them into the warp and woof of our lives. This it is which is acceptable in His sight, this it is which is useful and meritorious for us. What the Heart of our Lord yearns for is this testimony of our loyalty and our generosity. This giving of our free service to Him, when we might have refused. If our Lord looked for a perfect prayer from us in the sense that it would be undistracted, in the sense that our thoughts would not wander, if He desired from us sensible devotion and perceptible fervor, then He would have fashioned us quite differently from what He has. He would have made our minds less unstable, our imaginations more under our control and our feelings more in our power.

How consoling it is to all of us in the midst

of our distractions and dissipation of mind, in the midst of our wandering thoughts and erratic imagination, in the time of our coldness and dryness, when we seem drawn to things that are low and gross, to know that our prayers are pleasing and acceptable in His sight, if we struggle to make them so. What God looks for and expects is our sincere effort. If we battle manfully when in His presence, then our prayer will be acceptable. If we do all in our power to eliminate distractions, and if we strive to overcome our mental laziness and gird ourselves to generous efforts, then even though our thoughts wander and our hearts remain cold, our prayer is acceptable in the divine sight. It is acceptable because we have done our best, and God, the best of Fathers, can not, and will not, exact more.

It is not true, then, to say, as it is often said, that we can not pray. The command to do so is too explicit to admit of doubt. The one enemy to profitable and salutary prayer is sluggishness and laziness of will. If we are willing, when the beads move through our fingers, or when we linger before the altar, or kneel at our bedsides, to struggle to fix our thoughts on holy things and strive to raise our affections to God, His Holy Mother or His

Saints, then, no matter what may be the distractions, our prayer is both fruitful for us and pleasing to the Sacred Heart. Distractions and wandering thoughts, for which we are not responsible, do not render our prayers fruitless. It is only in the other world, when we shall see our Lord face to face, that we can look to commune with Him and His Holy ones, undisturbed by our own weakness and the passing trifles of this life.

THE SHACKLES BROKEN

Who shall declare the powers of the Lord? **Ps. 105 :2.**

THE Sacred Heart of our Blessed Saviour must have been consoled as He taught the people who followed Him the blessed words of the "Our Father." As He looked lovingly into those eager upturned faces on the hills sloping down towards Bethany, His comfort at feeding with His divine words their hungering spirits was unspeakable; but the joy of that Heart was soon to be turned to sorrow. The bright sunshine that overshone His soul would soon be darkened by shadows that were to thicken until the end. It was ever so in our Lord's public life; there were few days during which in one way or another He was not brought into contact with evidences of human malice and sin. The chalice was ever pressed to His lips.

"And He was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb. And when He had cast out the devil the dumb spoke, and the multitude were in admiration at it. But some of them said, 'He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.' "

Surely this was indeed a sad scene. A poor unfortunate sufferer, who perhaps for years had been under the influence of the evil one, who had been tortured in many ways and had been deprived even of the gift of speech, had been the recipient of a great boon from his loving Saviour. The Sacred Heart was touched, as our Lord looked at the imploring eyes of that poor victim yearning to be freed from his anxieties of spirit and torture of body. How hard it must have been in his hour of pain and need to be deprived of the power of communicating by word with those who could sympathize and help! The distress of mind and the suffering of soul, the torture of his pained frame had cried out for relief and assistance, but it was impossible for that poor, dumb tongue to tell of his tortures and his needs. How he must have longed to be able to express them adequately to those he loved! And now by a touch of power and mercy he is cured.

No wonder that those pleading eyes which looked up into the Saviour's face moved the Sacred Heart to tenderness. No wonder that the thin and pained countenance was more eloquent than any spoken word and readily found a response from the Master's love. So

when our Lord by His power "cast out the devil, the dumb spoke, and the multitude were in admiration of it."

We need not linger over the details of this beautiful and consoling wonder, as it is remarkably similar to a like miracle related of our Lord in Galilee at an earlier period, which we have already treated. A marvel manifesting such compassion and power, should surely have escaped the carping and criticism of those who were present. Yet though the multitude wondered some of them said: "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." On a former occasion when our Lord had given a similar display of power and goodness, the same accusation of acting under the influence and with the help of Satan had been hurled against Him, the same misjudgment had been pronounced; but at that time in His earlier ministry this charge was brought by the Scribes, for St. Mark puts it: "The Scribes who were come down from Jerusalem said, 'He hath . . . Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils He casteth out devils.'" The accusation on this occasion seems to have come from the common people.

On through the months, as the opposition to our Lord grew and the hostile attitude of

the ruling classes became known, falsehoods would gradually percolate into the minds of the common people, who, poisoned by their leaders, now uttered the accusation and the criticism. Indeed, it may be said with truth that the very death of our Lord on Mount Calvary had been brought about by His enemies through the circulation of falsehoods against Him. These grew to such proportions and such frequency that even the common people believed them, and because of them they rejected Him for Barabbas and clamored for His Blood.

We can dwell with profit for our own spiritual life upon the practical aspect of this wonderful cure. To each of us has been granted the great gift of speech. Through God's mercy we are not dumb; we have that wonderful power of communicating through human language the sentiments and affections that are born in our souls, and the thoughts that arise in our minds. How sad the lot of the dumb! With difficulty can they give expression to the emotions that well up into the hearts, the affections of love and of gratitude for those who are near and dear to them. They can show their feelings and emotions in their eyes, on their faces, but, alas, their

tongues are tied and they cannot tell with the music of their voices the story of their hearts. How full of sadness these dumb silent lives! What a barrier separates them from those they hold closest to their hearts!

Yet how often is this great gift of speech abused! How often is it turned into an instrument of harm for the ruin of souls, and to the pain of the Heart of Christ! It were better a thousand times to be dumb than that we should calumniate our neighbor and attribute to him faults and failings that are the outcome of an uncontrolled imagination or the offspring of envy and jealousy. This sin, too, of calumny, if indulged in, we must always remember, brings with it the obligation of restitution. If by falsehood we injure our neighbor's reputation, tarnish his fair name, lower him in the esteem of others, we are as much bound to repair the harm as we are bound to restore a purse if we steal it. In fact the obligation is greater, as reputation is far above all the dross of human wealth. Yet how difficult the restitution is at times! Often there is no power in human tongue that can restore the good name once it has been smirched by the taint of calumny or slander. There are sins of detraction, lying, profanity, self-praise, frivolity, the cheap

cleverness of unfavorable and biting criticism and other faults, all of which pain the Heart of Christ, and are surely an unjust return to Him for the great gift of speech, of which we might have been so easily deprived. What harm is done to God's honor, what pain inflicted on human lives by these sins and faults of the tongue!

But it will help more not to linger on the failings, but rather to look at the positive side of this wonderful power of the spoken word. Think for a moment of the influence it gives for good. Reflect upon the efficacy of kind words. They are like heavenly music escaped to earth, which makes weakened lives stronger, darkened souls brighter, and lifts from heavy hearts burdens of sorrow and of pain. Prejudices disappear before kind words as the morning mists melt before the summer sun at dawn. Their disappearance may not be logical. we cannot account for it but they cannot resist the influence of kind words any more than ice can resist the heat of the noon-day sun.

Quarrels, breaches in families, misunderstandings among those who once loved us, all give way before the healing power of the spoken word. The misunderstandings may not have been explained away, the hurt feel-

ings may yet smart, the fires of anger may be still smoldering, yet somehow or other the kind word is spoken and explanations become unnecessary, the wounded feelings are soothed, the fires of anger die away and peace and smiles and joys of other days come back again to brighten human souls and human homes.

Doubtless there are lives today, myriads of them, saddened and discouraged, perhaps there are even souls in hell, because of unkind words; souls, too, which a kind word would have saved. Surely no one can question that thousands of homes are brightened, countless souls made stronger, timid hearts braver because of some one who has spoken kindly. Tears are dried, sighs are silenced, wounded spirits healed by a kind and encouraging word.

If we turn over the pages of the Gospel and dwell upon our Lord's own sayings how seldom is there found aught that was harsh instead of gentle! For the hypocrite He had words of reproach because his only cure was his unmasking, but in all other cases it is true that the bruised reed He would not break and the smoking flax He would not quench. There is great happiness in this habit of kindly speech. In our own lives it soothes us in moments of irritation and shuts out our worries

and our cares. These melt before it as the foam melts on the white sand of the seashore. Kind words are a fuel to our own spiritual life, and under them the heat grows warmer, and we are drawn nearer to the throne of God. They win for us many spiritual graces which make us more Christlike and so give us more power and influence with souls. These motives are surely strong enough to prompt us to show our gratitude to God daily for the great gift of human speech, by using that blessed power for His glory, for the happiness of others and for our own spiritual benefit.

The Ten Lepers

THE BLIGHT BANISHED

As they went, they were made clean. St. Luke 17:14.

OUR Lord was on His way to the Holy City for the Feast of the Dedication. It was His last journey thither from the up-country. Owing to the plots of the Pharisees Galilee had been left for good and He was to return there no more in mortal form. Samaria, which at the opening of His public ministry had begged Him to tarry within its borders, now, because of the opposition and antagonism of the Samaritans themselves, was closed to Him. Those who in other days had welcomed Him now refused Him shelter and were gladly rid of His presence among them.

He probably traveled to Peræa, whither His footsteps were directed, through the valley of Bethsan between the confines of both provinces. The ground which He trod was sacred as well as rich in historic memories in the story of His people's life. Over His path fell the shadows of Gelboe on whose slopes the Israelites were defeated and slaughtered in great number by the Philistines. On those same green slopes, beautiful now in their early

spring garb, the three sons of Saul had fallen, and the guilty King wounded, had slain himself by his own hand. Over from the hills of Galaad, which loomed up in the distance, had come the "valiant men" from beyond the Jordan, and carrying away the bodies of the King and his sons had buried them. "When the inhabitants of Jabes Galaad had heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, all the most valiant men arose, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons . . . and they took their bones and buried them in the wood of Jabes." There they remained until afterwards disinterred by David they were laid away in the ancestral graves in the cave at Sela.

With these and other memories in His mind our Lord moved through the valley and "entering into a certain town, there met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off and lifted up their voice, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.'" To understand what a transcendent favor these poor unfortunates pleaded for and received, we must dwell for a moment on the nature of that dread disease and the condition of those affiicted.

Leprosy was a loathsome and terrible malady, and always fatal. Its progress towards

death was slow and agonizing. The victim, banished from his family and those he loved and from the haunts of men, with bare head and mourner's rent garments and lips covered, was forced to wander in solitude or with companions in the same suffering and misery. At the sound of human footsteps he was obliged to shout out "Unclean, unclean!" None were to salute or approach him; his footsteps polluted the very ground upon which he trod. His existence was a living death, the very fountains of his life blood were corrupted, his countenance distorted, and his body festering and decaying with foul plague spots from which there was no release except the dark tomb in the hillside graveyard. Surely the poor sufferer's future was dark and black and hopeless and prompted to despair.

Such then was the condition of the ten men who presented themselves that morning to our Blessed Saviour on His way to the Sacred City. Had He been a Rabbi, or a ruler of the synagogue, or a Scribe or a Pharisee they would have fled away in fear and terror, there would have been no hope for any sign of kindness or sympathy. But these unfortunate victims had perhaps seen our Lord before and heard of His good deeds. Perhaps they had

listened to the music of His voice and its sweet compelling tones. Perhaps the report of His constant healing of all manner of diseases had reached them; and so, in their souls there may have been the hope of cure. It seems not improbable that these lepers, from the fact that so many had gathered together, must have learned through the rumors spread up and down the country of His power of healing their terrible affliction, so that when the tidings of our Lord's approach came to them, they determined to plead together for release from their common misery.

How that dull, plaintive cry must have grated upon the ears of the multitude! "Unclean, unclean!" rang out in chorus from those ten harsh voices, rang out from those dry and parched throats as the throng moved back lest it be contaminated. But that cry stirred the depths of the compassion and tenderness of the Sacred Heart. The wild, despairing shout of warning, "Unclean, unclean!" was followed by the piteous prayer for the exercise of His merciful power in their behalf.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," was the cry that was born in their hearts and rose to their lips as the vision of the Master dawned upon their blurred sight. That petition, like

every prayer from needy souls, like every prayer from suffering human hearts and crushed spirits to the Heart of Christ, was not left unanswered, but was heard and granted. At once, without touch or command of power, without the lifting of the eyes or white hands to Heaven in supplication, He bade them go and show themselves as healed to the Priest, "Whom when He saw He said: 'Go show yourself to the Priest,' and it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean."

They knew the meaning of that command, its significance could not escape them. Often in the past, in their long agonies of pain, in their lonesomeness, in their solitude and hunger for the sight of their loved ones and for the converse of other years with their fellow-men, they longed and yearned that the Priest of the synagogue would stand over them and pronounce them clean. Such hopes if they were ever stirred momentarily in their darkened souls were fruitless and must have ended in despair; but now at the sound of that voice of power they at once felt the blood stirring in their veins, the corruption of disease falling away from them like a discarded mantle and the full vigor of health of other days returned to them as they hurried at the Master's bidding

to the Priest to be pronounced healed and cured.

There is, however, another leprosy that is more appalling than the leprosy of the body, and that is the leprosy of the spirit. The rotting and festering lepers on the Judean hillsides, were not half as disgusting to human eyes as are the souls of men and women deformed, disfigured and corrupted by sin. The leprosy of the soul is far more serious, far more blighting, far more deadly than any leprosy of human limb or human body. Think for a moment of the spotless purity beyond all word and beyond all thought, of the sinless and all perfect Godhead of our infinitely holy and loving Heavenly Father. Think of the sinlessness of our Blessed Saviour Himself. He stood on the marble steps of Jerusalem's Temple and challenged the world to convict Him of sin. His soul, united with the Godhead, was plunged and bathed and penetrated with the divine purity. The sanctity of God's white angels is darkness compared to it, and Mary's spotlessness a blur and a blemish. He is the fountain, the measure, the standard of all holiness. How revolting then in His sight must be the human soul stained by sin! How disgusting in His eyes the souls that are cov-

ered with its filth and polluted with its corruption! Mortal sin in human souls is death and means instant separation from God and inevitable perdition if continued in to the end.

Yet, how He longs to pardon and to cleanse such souls! The cleansing of the lepers was but the merest type, the slightest shadow of the healing which He wishes to bring about in the hearts of men. We can form no concept of the hunger and thirst of the Divine Heart for the healing of human souls, a hunger and a thirst so deep and so intense that He poured out the last drop of His Blood from the five wounds on the Cross that they might be made clean and guiltless in His sight. So ardent is it in His Sacred Heart that He ever tarries with us underneath the sanctuary lamp so that strengthened by His Body and His Blood we may sin no more.

Dwelling on our altars He will not only wash us from our sins and pardon the past; by His touch He will not only make us clean from every stain, but He will infuse into our souls His fuller graces by which we shall grow from day to day in His life and His love. For He himself told us long ago on the Lakeshore: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the

same also shall live by Me." Just as on that spring day He infused a new life, so to speak, into the corrupting bodies of the lepers, so from the altar, if we approach Him, He will not merely cleanse us from sin, but He will instil into our souls a new, a higher, a divine life. Yet men stay away; but then, alas, they die, though they seem to live.

A STRANGER'S THANKS

And this was a Samaritan. St. Luke 17:16.

OUR Blessed Saviour, touched by the prayer of the ten lepers, bade them go to their Priests, and "as they went they were made clean." Their loathsome bodies, burnt with fever and festered with corruption, were once more healed and sound. Like slaves emerging from a dark dungeon of sorrow, pain and despair, they were again free in the enjoyment of all the privileges of the law. Surely so transcendent a gift, so marvelous a favor should open up the well-springs of gratitude and make them gush forth in expressions and deeds of thankfulness.

St. Luke, however, tells us that only "one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks. And this was a Samaritan." After their years of lingering disease, with no hope in the dark future, with the prospect before them of suffering and agony till the grave closed upon their life of misery, one would have thought that nothing could have pre-

vented an outburst of passionate thankfulness. We would expect that, when the consciousness of their cure dawned upon them, an irresistible instinct of gratitude would have drawn them back to the Master and have flung them at His feet to give expression to the sentiments which of necessity should have welled up in their hearts.

But no, of the ten, all recipients of a common favor and singular grace, only one, and he not a son of Israel, returned to manifest his gratitude and appreciation for the great boon bestowed upon him. The nine Jews went, as our Lord had bidden them, presumably to the synagogue to show themselves to the Priests, while the poor alien, the despised Samaritan "went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks."

It is not easy to explain the ingratitude of the nine Jews. Possibly they had associated with the Samaritan, whom the Jews despised, only when drawn together by a common misery; when they were healed and the common malady was gone, the sympathy which had bound them together ceased and separating from him they would not join in his return to the Great Physician. Perhaps in their pride,

as children of Abraham, they felt they had a right to be healed and looked upon the cure as their due. They were willing enough to accept the favor and thus acknowledge His power, but to return and in gratitude fall at His feet like the outcast Samaritan, thus committing themselves to discipleship and allegiance to Christ, whom their Priests, Scribes and Pharisees were suspicious of and condemned, this they could not and would not do.

The ingratitude of the nine was noticed by our Blessed Saviour and His Sacred Heart was pained. In sorrowing surprise He said:

"Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

The Heart of our Blessed Saviour was used to ingratitude, but in this instance it was so general and so evident that such clear neglect of duty caused our Lord to give expression to His painful astonishment. Some even have thought that the Samaritan was rejected by the Jewish Priests who refused to declare him cured and that he returned to our Blessed Saviour in order that our Saviour might supply the legal requirements for his healing. Of this, however, there is no indication in the narrative. Besides, had this been the case he

would not have been worthy of the commendation bestowed on him by our Lord. He returned to the feet of the Master, not because he had been repulsed by the Priests of the Law, but because he was prompted by a deep sense of gratitude to kneel at his Benefactor's feet in thankfulness and worship.

To the grateful Samaritan, prostrate before Him, our Lord uttered the consoling words:

"Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole."

No act of virtue is ever unrewarded in God's service. There, every least desire, every slightest action with its smallest detail is valued at its true worth, and always receives a fitting recompense; so the return of the Samaritan, his grateful act of worship, met with a generous and loving response on the part of our Saviour.

Not only was the leprosy banished from his body, not only was he relieved of the material disease, but the leprosy of his spirit was cured by the words of our Lord and the disease of his soul cast forth, and into his life, no doubt, came from the generous Heart of Christ many spiritual blessings and gifts. The self-sufficient Jews on the other hand went away empty-handed and as needy in spirit as

when they approached and cried out, "Unclean, unclean!" They did not return. So they missed Christ's blessing and the spiritual light and supernatural strength which would have gone with it into their souls. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away."

If now we turn our thoughts upon ourselves, how often do we find that we walk in the footsteps not of the grateful Samaritan, but of the thankless nine! How few imitators of the former our Blessed Saviour finds in His service! We are ready enough in the time of need to cry out: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" We are eager to call for aid in times of stress and strain, in times of temptation, sorrow, pain and want; but when our prayer has been heard, our petition granted, the boon received, we readily join the throng and forget the Heart and the hand that blessed us.

This sin of ingratitude so common in our lives is not new. God has been treated thus by thousands and thousands upon whom He has showered His graces and blessings. After all the benefits which Joseph, guided by the Providence of God, had conferred upon Egypt, after he had fed her children in the days of famine and had guided her destinies when

difficulties were many and great in the land, the day came when all Joseph's services and good works were forgotten and "there arose a new king over Egypt that knew not Joseph," and he oppressed and persecuted the children of Israel whom Joseph had loved and protected.

When the children of Israel had been led by Moses out of Egypt and God had wrought in their favor many gracious miracles, He fed them on the manna which He rained down from heaven. The Jews instead of being grateful for the Heaven-sent food, murmured against Moses and said: "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free cost; the cucumbers come into our mind, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. Our soul is dry, our eyes behold nothing else but manna." Instead of being grateful and fostering in their hearts sentiments of thankfulness for the manna which had saved them from starvation, they murmured and grumbled against their leader, Moses, thus bringing upon themselves severe and dire chastisements from Almighty God. This same sin of ingratitude is pathetically emphasized by the prophet: "Hear, O ye heavens and give ear, O earth, for the Lord

has spoken. I have brought up children and exalted them; but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; and Israel hath not known Me and My people hath not understood." And again: "And now, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem and ye men of Juda, judge between Me and My vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes and it hath brought forth wild grapes?"

In our own lives nothing is so common and so odious as ingratitude. We go to God when needy, when in pain, when in sorrow. We fear His justice; so we kneel before Him and plead for pardon. Our petitions are granted, our prayers are heard, but like the nine lepers we never return to kneel with a hymn of praise and thanksgiving in our hearts and on our lips. The strange truth, too, is that this spirit of ingratitude is particularly the fault not of sinners, but of the fervent and earnest in His service. We do not look for gratitude from those living in sin, something else is expected from them. They have to repent, to be reconciled with God and do penance, but we do look for thankfulness from His forgiven and faith-

ful children, from those at peace with Him and living in the enjoyment of His grace and the possession of His privileges, and yet it is precisely from these that often it is not forthcoming. Indeed, this is our Lord's complaint to Blessed Margaret Mary, where He asks that reparation be made for the ingratitude of those who are devoted to His service. Holy Writ, too, tells us, and much is implied in the words, that the wounds and bruises and stripes with which He was wounded were received in the house and at the hands of His friends. Surely, then, those devoted to the League of the Sacred Heart will not join the ranks of the nine ungrateful Jews, but will rather imitate the grateful Samaritan and show in their lives that the coldness, forgetfulness and ingratitude of the past are regretted and that the future will be filled with thankfulness, chanting in their grateful hearts with St. John: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction."

The Best Part

HE FLEES TO PERÆA'S HILLS

He escaped out of their hands. St. John 10:39.

OUR Lord had come to Jerusalem for the last time before the brief triumph of the Hosannas of Palm Sunday. St. John tells us: "It was the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; and it was winter, and Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's Porch." The short gray days of the fall had passed into winter and the slopes of Olivet were bare and bleak as our Blessed Saviour made His way from beyond the Jordan to the festival in the Sacred City. Solomon's Porch, which was the eastern enclosure of the Temple, had been built upon the very foundations of the ancient structure and to it clung the memories of the greater Temple and the happenings of former days.

Within the precincts of the holy house, from the books of the Machabees, the priests read aloud to the people the story of the cleansing of the Temple which had given rise to the Feast: "And they arose before the morning on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month (which is the month of Casleu) in the

hundred and forty-eighth year. And they offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of holocausts which they had made. According to the time, and according to the day wherein the heathens had defiled it, in the same was it dedicated anew with canticles, and harps, and lutes, and cymbals. And all the people fell upon their faces, and adored, and blessed up to heaven, Him that had prospered them. And they kept the dedication of the altar eight days, and they offered holocausts with joy, and sacrifices of salvation, and of praise. And they adorned the front of the temple with crowns of gold, and escutcheons, and they renewed the gates, and the chambers, and hanged doors upon them. And there was exceeding great joy among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was turned away. And Judas, and his brethren, and all the church of Israel decreed, that the day of the dedication of the altar should be kept in its season from year to year for eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month of Casleu, with joy and gladness."

This was the impressive scene which the people had come up to commemorate and at which our Lord was present. In Solomon's Porch then, our Saviour was walking and dis-

coursing, as was His wont, to the people. His mind no doubt went back to the days when Judas Machabeus, after defeating the enemies of his people, had purified the Temple which had been so foully profaned by Antiochus. He could look across the valley to the bare slopes of Olivet where slept the prophets in their white sepulchres, whom His own people had done to death.

Suddenly, as if by a preconcerted signal "the Jews therefore came round about Him and said to Him: 'How long dost Thou hold our souls in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.'" As our Lord's life moved on slowly towards His death the jealousy and hatred of His enemies increased. In a few months their hate would be sated by the shedding of His Blood. The question put to Him by the Pharisaical party that day was not asked from any desire for information but with the intent, as had so often happened in the past, of ensnaring Him in His words. There could be no reasonable doubt in their minds that our Lord claimed to be the Son of God. In their Temple He had said on another occasion: "As the Father has life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself." Again, by the Lakeshore

He had made them a promise which showed that He must be the Son of God: "And Jesus said to them: 'I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.' " These and other expressions which our Lord had frequently used when speaking to His enemies declared His Godhead. He had told them that the Father had sent Him for the redemption of the world. In the Temple, perhaps in the very porch where He now stood, at the Feast of Tabernacles He had dwelt on His relations to the Father, so that to men of good will it was clear that He was one with the Father. He had emphasized the same truth in language more eloquent than words. He had spoken in deeds of power and tenderness which showed beyond all reasonable doubt that He was divine.

The question, then, was not that He should claim to be mightier than Judas Machabeus, whose memories were in the minds of all that day. He was not asked to arrogate to Himself amid all the joys of the celebration a glory similar to that of Solomon who had built the first Temple on whose foundations they were standing, but the question, put through jealousy and envy, was designed to

force from Him some clear statement of His Godhead which might bring Him into conflict with the Jewish people and prove His undoing by the Roman authorities. They wished a definite declaration on account of which they would be able to cite Him before the Sanhedrim, or which would bring down upon Him the ban of imperial Rome.

In answer to the query suggested by these unworthy motives our Lord does not say in explicit terms that He is Christ, but in His reply there is abundant proof that He claimed to be the Son of God and it was passion and blindness that prevented His enemies from seeing the truth. He saw their unbelief and knew that even the most direct and explicit assertion of His Divinity would not convince them. Their minds were darkened, their wills twisted and distorted by the unworthy motives which influenced them. Besides He was not the Messias of the Jews in the sense that He had come to be a temporal ruler, or was there to reclaim temporal dominion for Israel. This is the sense of their question, and hence we need not be surprised at our Lord's refusal to give a direct answer. Our Blessed Saviour contented Himself with appealing to the works that He had done which clearly showed

Him to be Divine: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." "They sought therefore to take Him, and He escaped out of their hands." It is upon His works that our Lord based His claims and rested His case. But alas, they are not sheep of His flock, they have refused to listen to His call and will not hear His voice. If they had hearkened to His plea He would have given them eternal life and they would have been safe in the Father's keeping. Their reply to this answer, their response to this appeal was an increase of anger and jealousy in their stubborn souls and blinded hearts. "They sought to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands."

It was a stormy scene on the evening of the Feast as He left Solomon's Porch. He was defenceless. The angry crowd surged up with threatening fists raised to strike. Eyes that in other days perhaps had looked with gratitude and love into His, now flashed with the fires of hate. Suddenly they drew back, unwillingly making a passage for Him, and He passed out from among them. Galilee had ungratefully cast Him forth from its confines

never to return. Judea now bids Him bend His footsteps towards its open gates that would be closed upon Him. As nearly thirty-three years ago there was no room for Him in the inn on Bethlehem's frost-nipped hills, so now Jerusalem is sealing her doom by casting Him out beyond her walls and bidding Him return no more. In the gloaming of that festival day He walks silently over the Mount of Olives and makes His way to the distant, quiet hills of Peræa. The fading light of the setting sun on the Peræan hills gave Him welcome to the scenes where John in other days had been baptizing, and among which three years ago He began the work of His sacred ministry. There, amid those quiet hills, He stayed until the time to go up for His Passion.

We ought not to leave this incident without dwelling upon its important lesson. In reflecting upon the discourses of our Saviour in which He clearly lays claim to the Divine Nature, or in dwelling upon the superabundant miracles which go to prove His Divinity we often wonder that His claims could have been rejected, His testimony set aside. This incident gives us the explanation. The Priests and rulers who led the people were influenced by hatred and jealousy of Christ. We know these

men sufficiently to see how such unworthy passions could creep into their lives, insidiously and even under the guise of zeal. They loved the honor and favor in which they were held by the people. They made an ostentatious display of their fidelity to the Law. They were sticklers for its least minute exterior observance. It is easy to see how quickly they would resent our Lord's growing popularity, and condemn His teaching, diametrically opposite to theirs. Hence their souls would readily take fire against this new Teacher, and their jealousy would soon grow to hatred. This passion once indulged would blind them to our Lord's doctrine, to the force of His miracles, and they would quickly doubt His claim to be the Son of God and finally reject it altogether.

What was true of the Jews of old is equally true today. Men reject the Faith not because of any weight of argument against it, not because its reasons are not cogent, but because they do not see. They are blind, as blind as the man whose eyes our Lord touched to life in the Temple porch, because of human passion deliberately indulged. What is true of the Faith is equally true of its practices. Men stay away from the Sacraments for years, they hold

aloof from the gifts of the altar, not because they do not believe but because they are blinded to the importance and necessity of these gifts in their spiritual lives, blinded by deliberate indulgence of some passion or other or some gratification which they will not give up. Exteriorly they seem influenced by Christian principles and are apparently irreproachable. Their failure to avail themselves of spiritual privileges is often a mystery to their families and their friends; but if we could go down into the secrets of their souls, it is almost universally true that we should find some hidden sin, some concealed indulgence, some occult passion which even their closest and dearest do not suspect that keeps them from the practice of their Faith. Watch them when death draws the scales from their blind eyes, and their cowardly spirits tremble before the awful tribunal of God's accounting! See how hurriedly they call for the spiritual benefits of the Church after divulging to God's minister, at the brink of the grave, secrets they have kept hidden during all the years of neglected graces.

SAD HEARTS AT BETHANY

He, whom Thou lovest, is sick. St. John 11:3.

WHEN the Jews took up stones to cast at our Blessed Saviour, "He went again beyond the Jordan, into that place where John was baptizing first, and there He abode." The spot chosen by our Lord for His retirement would naturally be a place beyond the Jordan so as to be outside the jurisdiction of His enemies who at that period were constantly on His track. At the same time He would select a district easily accessible, so that as the end of His ministry was drawing to a close He could continue His teaching and preaching among the people who flocked to hear Him. It is not surprising then to find Him sojourning on holy ground, in the eastern Jordan district, hallowed by the memories and the labors of the Baptist's early ministry.

Here, then, our Blessed Saviour continued His spiritual activities; for no conspiracies, no threats, no persecutions of His enemies could divert Him from those acts of zeal and charity which ever and everywhere characterized His public life. In the midst of active works and

in the exercise of His apostolic career our Lord awaited the next move of His enemies before taking His way once more into Judea, and climbing the steep slope towards Jerusalem and laying down His life outside the Sacred City for man's redemption.

It was while teaching at Bethabara, in the eastern district of the Jordan, that Lazarus His beloved friend fell ill, and a message came to Him from Martha. "Now there was a certain man sick, named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary and Martha, her sister. (And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) His sisters therefore sent to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.'"

It was a sad home from which that message came. Lazarus, perhaps, had been over the mountain to Jerusalem and returned tired, fatigued and feverish to the little hillside cottage one quiet evening. The quick, sharp eyes of those affectionate sisters soon detected their brother's illness. No change ever so slight in that loved face escaped their watchful solicitude. Lazarus had retired sooner than usual that evening in the hope that after the night of rest the fever would be gone. The

anxious sisters were early astir and in answer to their eager questioning Lazarus told the story of a sleepless, long and painful night. As the days wore away, the fever instead of abating grew higher. The physician from Jerusalem was baffled, his skill was helpless and there was no strength in the medicine to check the rising temperature. Day by day those loving sisters watched anxiously at that dying brother's bedside. No care that love could suggest, no attention or sacrifice which affection could dictate was omitted. They loved their brother too well to neglect aught that could avail for his healing. But alas, all hope seemed to die out in their troubled souls as they watched that precious life ebbing slowly away towards eternity as the outgoing tide surely ebbs down to the sea.

Day after day for long hours Lazarus lay motionless on the couch. His ear, though dulled by the approach of death, was still sensitive for the sound of one footfall which was not to be heard in that sad home till the grave had closed upon him. His eyes, blurred with the film of his last earthly hours turned ever and anon towards the door with a look of expectancy, and yet that loved Form for which he longingly waited he was not to see again

till bidden to come forth in a new life from the grave. In a low, weak, patient voice he bade the sisters look down the road and tell him if the Master was coming, if they could see Him coming up the slope towards Bethany, as had been His wont so often before. With lingering and hopeful looks Mary and Martha watched the turn of the road in their eagerness for our Lord's approach. Surely He would come and not tarry.

When Jairus told Him of his dead child lying cold and motionless in the cottage by the Lake, when that broken-hearted father said that the light had gone out of his darkened home and the music of his child's voice had been stilled, did not the Master go and give back to that fireside its light and its music? When at the gate of the city of Naim as the poor afflicted mother was bearing away to his last resting place her only son, when He saw that the staff upon which she leaned had snapped, and the joy of her widowed years had been turned to sorrow and despair, did He not console and comfort her, as St. Luke tells us? "Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, He said to her: 'Weep not.' And He came near and touched the bier. And He said: 'Young man, I say

to thee, arise.' And he that was dead sat up and began to speak and He gave him to his mother."

Mary and Martha and their dying brother knew of these two consoling incidents in our Blessed Saviour's wondrous career in Galilee. Time and again had they gone over in warm affection the details of these manifestations of their Master's power and goodness. Often, too, had they heard the story of them from the pilgrims from Galilee who paused at Bethania in the last hours of their journeyings from the up-country before crossing Mount Olivet and entering the Sacred City. Surely, then, He would not linger but would soon come and putting His right hand on their brother's head He would banish the cruel fever that threatened to steal away so precious a life.

How lonely that home on Olivet's hillside would be without that brother! How dreary would the yet unborn years be to those two sisters if Lazarus were taken from them! How helpless without his strong arm to toil for them! How mournful when that loved form would be laid away in his grave beside his father and mother in the hillside! But as the days wore on and their brother's strength

waned they saw that unless the Master came quickly and in His mercy restored Lazarus to health and strength, they could only look forward to a life of sadness, patiently waiting through the years till called to meet that loved brother in another and a better land, "where death shall be no more." One day when the hope of recovery had almost died out in their hearts, the troubled sorrowing sisters sent a message to the Master telling Him of Lazarus's illness. Patiently and confidently they awaited His coming, anxiously watching and fanning the little spark of life in their brother's slowly weakening body. The long day wore on towards the sad eventide. The Master did not come. The welcome Form at the turn of the road failed to meet their watchful glances, and as the shadows of the trees were lengthening over the Jordan valley and twilight was dying into darkness, the beads of perspiration stood out on their brother's white face, the thin tapering fingers twitched at the coverlet on the couch, the eyes turned and looked lovingly into theirs, a smile which reflected the light of another world rested for a moment on his countenance; their brother was dead and the Master had not come.

How often in our own lives are there similar

scenes! How frequently we call upon the Master and apparently we are not heard! How many times does He seem to linger, tarry and finally not come at all! Yet it is ever true that no least prayer from human lips to the Sacred Heart remains unanswered. Just as Mary and Martha pleaded for their brother's life and our Lord longed to comfort and console them, yearned to hurry from Bethabara over the Jordan and up the steep ascent to Bethany, yet tarried and lingered in Peræa and to their petition apparently turned a deaf ear for their greater good and His highest purpose; so in our lives when we kneel and plead, to His sorrow He is often constrained to withhold His hand because what we ask is not for our spiritual welfare nor for His honor and glory. If the Sacred Heart dictated the delay in the case of Mary and Martha who loved Him so tenderly, how can we be surprised if He defers answering our prayers which are so cold and apathetic, so seldom strengthened by works of penance and self-sacrifice? But of this one point we must ever be sure, when we pray He is always counting the hours and the moments till He can grant our least wish and give us that which is for our comfort and our welfare.

How beautiful their prayer was and how full of confidence! Those anxious sisters ask for nothing, proffer no special request, solicit no favor. They simply manifest their sorrow, their brother's illness, fully confident that our Lord's Sacred Heart will dictate what is best. What a title, what a claim to have their prayer heard, our Blessed Saviour's love for a dying brother! Is the same not true of each of us? Have we not the same reason to urge? Did not St. Paul remind us of this personal love of our Lord when He said: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me"? For our spiritual healing, then, we can offer the same motive as Mary and Martha did, when they sent the messenger to Him to acquaint Him of their brother's illness. And it is unspeakably consoling that there is in the Sacred Heart this personal individual love for us. That love is so wide and deep, that the love of a mother brooding over the cradle of her sick child and yearning for its young life, is but the slightest shadow of the great warm love of our Lord for our spiritual life and healing.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God. St. John 11:4.

OUR LORD was in the east Jordan district at Bethabara when the news of Lazarus' death reached Him. The messenger from the two sorrowing sisters gave Him the pathetic details of His friend's serious sickness in the very words used by Mary and Martha: "Lord, behold, he, whom Thou lovest, is sick."

How beautiful the prayer and how expressive of the confidence and trust of these two deeply afflicted sisters! Surely no more poignant affliction could threaten them than the loss of their brother. No keener sorrow could overshadow their hearts. Yet at the darkest moment of their distress, when their grief was deepest, when sending a message to Him who loved and could cure their brother, they refrained from any direct petition, but simply manifested the sharp blow that, unless He intervened, would fall upon their lives and the well remembered home at Bethany.

How like our Blessed Mother's prayer at

Cana, where three years before our Lord had anticipated the time of His miracles! In the midst of the joy and merriment of the marriage festivity our Lady saw that the wine was running low, and with that delicacy and thoughtfulness which must have sat so naturally upon her, to save the happy couple any embarrassment on their bridal day, she turned to her Son and pleaded eloquently by simply manifesting the need in these words: "They have no wine." Possibly Mary and Martha sitting at our Lord's feet in other days may have learned the story of the efficacy of this prayer from our Lord Himself. Possibly Mary, when at times she tarried at Bethany, may have told them of this evidence of her Son's goodness.

Our Lord, of course, knows all our needs; He knows them before we do; He realizes them more fully than it is possible for us to realize them. Yet our petitions and prayers are pleasing to Him and in many cases are required that He may grant us the favors which His Sacred Heart yearns to pour out upon us. Mary and Martha sent the news of their distress, but they did not ask or urge Him to come. They knew full well that His affection for Lazarus would dictate what was best.

Then, too, these intimate friends were not ignorant of the recent events in the Temple when the opposition to our Lord had grown so bitter that His enemies took up stones to cast at Him. They knew that the antagonism to Him had reached such a tension that His life, if He came to Judea, might be in danger. No word, therefore, of theirs, even for the saving of their brother's life, would escape their lips to urge the Master toward directing His footsteps into Judea where so sacred a life might be jeopardized. Better a thousand times that their brother should pass from a sick bed to the dark tomb on the hillside than that any danger should overshadow a life so precious.

Besides, the incident in our Lord's earlier life, when He cured at a distance the servant of the Centurion, was not unknown to them, and they could not forget our Lord's promise to the grief-stricken father who protested his unworthiness to have our Blessed Saviour cross the threshold of his home even for the curing of his servant, boldly professing that the Master by His mere word could bring back health and strength. So with firm faith and full reliance upon His love and power Mary and Martha sent their simple message: "Lord, behold, he, whom Thou lovest, is sick,"

but they were far from suggesting any course of action, relying as they did upon His personal love for them and His dying friend, their loved brother.

The messenger was apparently dismissed with this reply: "This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it." Naturally, the messenger would return with these consoling words on his lips, confident that our Lord had cured Lazarus. What then would be his surprise to find the two sisters mourning for their brother who had passed away in his absence! Yet the true meaning of our Lord's words was not that Lazarus would not die but that the final upshot of this illness would be not death but life so that God and His Blessed Son might be glorified. For "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, Mary, and Lazarus."

And well it would be for us if when sickness enters our homes we could make sure that it would not be unto death, not of course the death of the body, for sooner or later all must die, but the death of the soul. Sickness in many cases is often, and always can be, an immense grace. How frequently in souls that for years have been callous to religious influences and dry as summer dust, are there

awakened sentiments of faith, hope and love which have slept for many a day! At times on a bed of sickness a wasted life after years of neglect and sin is by God's grace picked to pieces and patched together again, for this is what contrition and return to God means. Surely such repentance after such a life is for the glory of God.

Then when sickness comes and the body is racked by pain, the blood grown thin, the limbs weak, and we are forced to sit idly with hands folded and watch the reapers toiling the livelong day, reaping and working in the fields, how we yearn to join them and do our part! How we worry and fret under our inaction! And yet if we bow our heads in humble submission and murmur with resignation: "Father, not my will but Thine be done," who will say that such resignation does not marvelously glorify the Son of Man?

Again, sickness is often not unto death, if we would have recourse to God and avail ourselves of absolution and holy anointing. The neglect of these Sacraments at such moments may be the death of both body and soul, for the very peace of mind and calmness of spirit which result from these holy means of grace are a great help toward a restoration to

health. Their reception is like the visit of the Master in the days of old to the sick and diseased by the Lakeshore, where His healing touch made all sound. St. James, too, tells us: "Is any one sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Yet, how often we find that the priest is the last one thought of and the last one called! He reaches the sick bed only to find the patient unconscious or dulled and drugged by narcotics, given often by non-Catholic doctors, who little realize the importance of the sacred duties which the priest performs, and thus at times the salvation of a soul is imperilled or at least the patient is deprived of the merit of acts of faith and resignation which ought to be the companions at the bedside of every soul departing to the presence of God.

After sending the message to Mary and Martha that the sickness of their brother was for the glory of God, our Lord tarried two days at Bethabara. "When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He still remained

in the same place two days." Our Lord might have cured the sick man by a word and at a distance as He had cured others, yet He preferred to have His friend die and pass for four days into the shadow of death. He permitted the afflicted sisters to be overwhelmed with sorrow and to suffer all the agonies of parting with their loved brother, and still He tarried two days away from that home of mourning where He had ever been welcomed and where bright smiles ever greeted His coming.

Had our Lord healed Lazarus by word and at once, as He might have done, the miracle would have been great indeed, but it would not have been such a testimony of love as the wondrous resurrection of their brother from the grave, nor would there have been such a marvelous resemblance to our Saviour's Passion and Resurrection between Him and His friend, as there is now, since the ringing command "Lazarus come forth," re-echoed along the slopes of Olivet, calling the dead man back to life and health again.

St. John tells us: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, Mary, and Lazarus." This love He manifested by tarrying two days at Bethabara. He refused them an ordinary miracle such as He had wrought time and again in His

public life, and He remained two days beyond the Jordan. He would not interrupt His apostolic ministry among the poor people who flocked down from the Peræan hills and up from the Jordan and gathered around Him, listening eagerly to every word that fell from His lips. He would not hurry across the Jordan and up the steep ascent to Bethany to console at once His friends in sorrow, but would labor on in Bethabara till the heart-broken sisters had laid away their beloved brother in the hillside. He would permit this extreme grief, this greatest trial of faith to His two lonesome friends, giving them at the same time the grace to believe in Him and trust Him, even after their brother had been committed to the tomb, because He had in store for them most wondrous graces which they knew not, blessings which would bring joy to their stricken home and their sorrowful lives, and new life to their brother, and therefore He tarried two days in Bethabara. If at times He appears to fail to listen to our appeals, is it not possible that He has in store for us richer blessings and more abundant favors?

JOURNEYING TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

"Lazarus is dead." St. John 11:14.

OUR Lord lingered and labored at Bethabara until the deepest sorrow settled upon the lonely home at Bethany, where Mary and Martha awaited His coming in vain. The messenger returned with the assurance that the sickness of their brother was not unto death, yet as they knelt at the bedside of Lazarus they saw his dearly cherished life ebb away, as the river flows on to the sea. One last look down the road to see if the Master was coming and all hope died out in their souls; for their dead brother lay white and cold on the couch.

Deep indeed was their grief, but it was soon to be turned into joy, when once again those dead eyes, which had so often looked love into theirs, would open and brighten; when those silent lips, which had so frequently spoken words of tenderness and affection, would whisper again the greetings of love; but the moment for the drying of their tears had not yet come.

In the meantime beyond the Jordan there was One thinking of them and their dead brother, One who never forgets and who wipes away every bitter tear, relieves every pain and brings surcease to every sorrow. Our Lord, who was about to start from Bethabara to Judea, announced gently and gradually to His Apostles the death of His friend: "Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may wake him out of sleep." His disciples therefore said: "Lord, if he sleepeth, he shall do well." Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly: "Lazarus is dead." When the disciples remonstrated with Him for exposing His life by going back into Judea (they had not forgotten how lately the Jews had tried to stone Him in the Temple porch) our Lord at once calmed their fears. There was no risk for Him anywhere, more than there is danger of a mishap for one who walks in broad daylight. The night of His Passion had not yet come and the power of His enemies was as yet restrained and held in check. They need then have no fear, yet Thomas in his loyalty exhorted the others to go with their Master even unto death.

Thomas spoke more truly than he knew, for it was the raising of Lazarus which brought

about the death of our Blessed Saviour. It was this wondrous miracle which so aroused the envy and jealousy of the Priests and Pharisees. Urged beyond endurance by the notoriety and popularity which at once accrued to our Saviour they finally determined to do away with Him.

Starting early in the morning and traveling all day, sunset found them at their journey's end. Many sacred memories doubtless flooded their souls under the inspiring words of our Blessed Saviour, as they moved over the country. To the south they could see Mount Nebo, from whose summit Moses had viewed with dying eyes the Promised Land. "Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab upon Mount Nebo, to the top of Phasga, over against Jericho; and the Lord showed him all the land of Galaad as far as Dan." Upon the top of this mountain "Moses, the servant of the Lord, died in the land of Moab by the commandment of the Lord." There in the plain the children of Israel had mourned the great lawgiver at his death. "And the children of Israel mourned for him in the plains of Moab thirty days."

The Disciples crossed the Jordan above the spot where Josue led the chosen people of God

in their march towards Jericho. "And the people marched over against Jericho and the priests that carried the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, stood girded upon the dry ground in the midst of the Jordan and all the people passed over through the channel that was dried up." Not so far away up the river is the spot to which three years ago the people had thronged to hear the Baptist and where John had baptized His Master. As they moved on, in the distance could be seen Galgal and Jericho, whose magnificent palm groves, long since passed away, had reminded Josue and the chosen people of the palm groves of Egypt on the banks of the Nile. Out before their gaze that morning were stretched the fields where in earlier days had grown the ripe, rich, yellow corn upon which the Hebrew people, after having been fed for forty years on the manna in the desert, were nourished as they entered the Promised Land. On the sacred hill at Galgal the Tabernacle had reposed until it found later a resting-place at Silo. They may recall that Galgal teemed with incidents in the life of Saul, David and Samuel; for on its heights was slain the wicked Agag spared by the disobedient king, who thus incurred the anger of God and the reproaches of Samuel,

who saw him no more after parting that day amid the palm groves.

While these incidents were before our Lord, still His thoughts went out no doubt in affectionate sympathy to the two suffering sisters, yearning for comfort in their quiet but desolate home. On to Bethany He was going, longing to bring consolation to His friends; He intended to call forth from the hillside the dead Lazarus. He was going to comfort and reward those two loving friends who had never for a moment doubted His affection for themselves and their brother, though surely He had sorely tried their faith and tested their love. He was going to Bethany for the sake of His Apostles as He had told them: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe." For the great wonder He was about to do, the raising of the dead from the grave, (perhaps the most striking miracle in our Lord's life) could not but strengthen the faith of the Apostles in their Master. In future days, now not so far distant, every support of faith in Him would be required. Days would be dark with little prospect of sunshine. The testing would be severe, almost to the breaking. The world would be strong and the flesh weak, almost to the yielding. Then it

would be that the memory of this wonder on the mountainside, of this miraculous display of power would stand them in good stead.

It was partly out of love for His Apostles that our Lord tarried at Bethabara, and delayed His journey to that death-bed. For their good He allowed the clouds of sorrow to gather and break over that once happy home; for had He come at once, as the sisters truly said, their brother had not died. The Master of life and death who loved Lazarus and Mary and Martha so tenderly could not have stood at that painful parting, could not have allowed the grave to close over His friend, could not have gazed upon the sorrowing sisters unmoved, but must have exercised His power for the healing of His dying friend to the joy of the two affectionate sisters.

Yet it is a pity to think that, while this miracle would be for the Apostles a source of great light upon the character of our Lord and a fountain of strength to them in the yet unborn years, upon one of their number it was to be a seed that would be stifled at once and utterly fail to produce any fruit whatsoever. All such spiritual experiences had now upon the traitor Judas only a blinding and hardening effect. The more our Lord's power was

manifested the more dull seemed to grow the spiritual vision of the faithless disciple and his heart to become more obdurate. No ray of light was now able to penetrate the thick darkness which enveloped him. No impulse of grace seemed to have the power to rouse that dull soul to a sense of loyalty to his Master or to a sentiment of shame for his treachery.

Day by day he had sunk deeper in his sin, day by day the vice of avarice had gripped him more and more tightly. Little by little it had grown into the web and woof of his life. Unsuspecting at first he had been lured on till the day had come when the presence of his Master so pleading, the sound of His voice so sweetly musical and compelling, the effect of His miracles so undoubted and convincing—when all these immense graces fell upon his soul and left him as unmoved as the wild waves of the ocean, beating at the foot of the cliffs which hang over the sea, leave unshaken the rocky foundations.

Before entering Bethany let us pause here for a moment and learn a lesson from the sad fate of Judas. All disloyalty to the Church, all wandering away from the path of virtue into habits of sin, comes into human life not

suddenly, not all at once, but stealthily, slowly, silently, insidiously. No man turns away from God of a sudden, no one passes from a condition of fervor to a state of sin by an instantaneous process. The process is gradual and silent and it often takes years in its development. Deterioration steals upon us like the approach of night, the light grows dim and fades slowly into twilight which is creeping over the valley and gradually and imperceptibly passes into the darkness of the night. So it is in God's service. Little by little duties are performed negligently and now and then omitted. A temptation is dallied with, not promptly resisted, indulged in to a certain degree up to the borderland of sin. Then prayer is found irksome. The efforts, generous in other days, are almost unconsciously relaxed, the time devoted to this daily exercise is at first curtailed, then prayer is omitted occasionally and at last finally given up. With prayer gone we cannot long remain faithful, and starved souls can no more resist the strong assaults of a vigorous temptation than can a starved body resist the onslaughts of disease. We can learn no more profitable lesson as we contemplate this mystery than to bear in mind that our own safety depends upon constant

watchfulness. If we yield little by little, it is only God's mercy that will save us. If any serious temptation comes into lives after periods of infidelity, the unfaithful soul will be swept from its moorings out into the sea. Thus it happened to Judas. When at the end he saw the hatred of the Priests and Pharisees against Christ, when he perceived that the notoriety of the raising of Lazarus from the dead had increased our Lord's popularity with the people and intensified the hatred of His enemies, he thought that they would spare no expense to secure Christ and to do away with Him; and so, the appeal was made to his dominant passion of avarice. The tree that is rotten and corrupted within, whose wood is loosened and decayed and no longer a closely knit fibre, may stand for a time and look like a giant of the forest because the sap makes its way up between the bark and the decaying wood to the branches; but let the storm sweep over the forest and while smaller and apparently weaker trees stand, our giant comes crashing down. It is just the same in the spiritual life. Little by little infidelities and meannesses sap our strength and in the day of storm and temptation we come crashing down to our own ruin and the scandal of others.

Possibly this thought may have been in our Lord's mind as going up the slope to Bethany He looked pleadingly into the face of Judas. Is He, too, pleading with us?

A LOVING PROMISE

"Thy brother shall rise again." St. John 11:23.

THE journey from Bethabara was drawing to a close, and our Lord with His Apostles was making His way up the slope that led to the house of mourning. After hearing the news of the death of Lazarus our Blessed Saviour had remained two full days at Bethabara, and at the end of His journey across the valley He reached Bethany to find that His friend Lazarus had been four days in the grave, and decay had perhaps already set in. "Jesus, therefore, came and found that he had been four days already in the grave."

Approaching the little town where His sorrowing friends dwelt, His Heart was filled with love for the afflicted sisters whom He had so severely tried, but their sorrow was soon to be changed to joy, their darkness into light. Though His friend lay dead in the tomb and the sisters were broken with grief, our Lord must have experienced great consolation for he was on the point of performing a miracle which would bring about the surer and the quicker approach of His Passion, for which

His Sacred Heart longed so ardently. For had He not said, "And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished"? The raising of Lazarus from the dead directed the attention of all Jerusalem to Him, and was the cause of a sudden and great increase in popularity which finally decided His enemies to put Him to death, for we read in St. John: "Many therefore of the Jews who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done. The Chief Priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council and said. 'What do we? For this Man doth many miracles. If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him and the Romans will come and take our place and nation.'"

On the threshold of this great wonder our Lord could look into the future and see down the yet unborn years His friend Lazarus (over whom judgment was suspended in some marvelous manner) toiling and laboring for the Faith and for the glory of the Master who had done great things for him. In His vision, too, of the future our Lord would perceive with consolation the fervent love and gratitude

which in all the years to come would well up in the hearts of those two tried and devoted friends, the grief-stricken sisters. All through their years they would ever bear in grateful remembrance that for their sake and out of love for their brother He had performed one of the most stupendous wonders of His life, and had made the grave give up its victim.

The little family which dwelt at the foot of Mount Olivet, now so greatly afflicted, must have been well known in the city. Probably they were people of some prominence and importance for "many of the Jews were come to Mary and Martha to comfort them concerning their brother." We may be sure that, though they were so severely tried, though the cross pressed so heavily upon them, though the tears of sorrow were forced from their eyes, yet they bore their burden of pain patiently and lovingly. Sorrow, that may be blessed and hallowed by the touch of the Man-God, is at times unblessed and unhallowed because it is not accepted with that spirit of resignation and trust which characterized these two sisters. Yet it is safe to say that that home is indeed a sad one over which no shadow ever falls. The flower to grow in all its loveliness, and to give forth its fragrant perfume must be over-

shadowed by the cloud, warmed by the sun and fed by the rain and the dews; so, too, in human life, if we are to cling close to the Master with the spirit of detachment that is necessary for union with Him there must be in our lives both sunshine and shower, the smile and the tear, the sigh and the song. Prosperity, unless tempered by some wind of failure, would easily draw us away from the Heart of Christ.

"Martha, therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet Him." From her lips fell no complaint; no murmur or distrust of our Lord's love entered her mind. Falling at His feet in reverence she greeted Him in her sorrow with the words which she and Mary must have interchanged so frequently during these last few lonesome days: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Martha had no doubt of our Lord's power and will to heal her brother, if He had been present to exercise it. She was sure that Divine Friend could not have been present at the deathbed of her dying brother and not have bidden him to rise cured in health. In other days, times without number, He had wrought such marvels for those who were not so close to Him, and Martha must have felt sure that had the Master been

present His love for Lazarus would not have permitted that precious life to ebb away, and that loved form to be hidden in a hillside grave. Yet even now, when all the circumstances point to the impossibility of her brother's return to life, Martha is not without faith in our Lord's power; but she has not taken in fully the teaching concerning Himself and His Divinity, and until she does He will not command the dead to come back to life. Yet, there is some lingering hope in Martha's mind, for she said to Him: "Now also I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give to Thee."

Jesus said to her: "Thy brother shall rise again." As yet the afflicted sister did not realize that our Lord's promise meant that He would call back Lazarus from the tomb of Mount Olivet in all the beauty and fulness of his manhood. She did not suspect that she would look once more into her brother's eyes, lit with the tender warmth of his love, that she would see again the familiar smile upon his lips for "she saith to Him: 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live; everyone that

liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever. Believest thou this?' She said to Him: 'I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into the world.'" Having thus elicited from Martha an expression of her unhesitating belief in His Divinity, our Lord is ready to summon the dead back to life, to give again the brother to his loving sister.

How often in human life, if we would listen to the whisperings of our Saviour to our spirits, similar words would be said and a like assurance given to us! A mother at the deathbed of her child sees a little life hanging upon the faintest thread, the brow is feverish, the little lips cracked, the tongue dry, the small hands twitching at the counterpane, and in an agony of grief she prays that her child be given back to her. If in that moment of sorrow she would listen with faith, she would hear the words, softer than the sighing of the waves on the seashore of a silent night: "Thy child shall rise again." The little one shall never rise from its cradle-bed till lifted by loving arms it is laid in its coffin; but the promise our Lord gives means that the child will rise to a higher and better life, a life with the myriads of little ones that have gone in

their purity and their innocence to the arms of Him who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

"Thy brother shall rise again." How many a heart-broken mother, like Monica of old, needs this abiding confidence in the words of the Master! Let her pray on and the erring soul of her boy, because of her prayers, will one day feel the touch of grace and follow it to a higher and a newer life. He will live again, not the life of the body, but the life of the spirit. He will live again, because a loving mother has for years trustingly prayed that her child would not taste death forever.

That prayers of this kind may be effective we must recognize that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. When our hearts are fixed on fleeting things, on things that fade and shrivel up like the leaves in the fall-time, on things that never can fill the infinite void of the human soul, we must remember the words, "he that believeth in Me although he be dead shall live." When souls have erred and wandered from God, when like the prodigal they have gone out from their father's house into a far off country, when they have become engrossed with the love of riches and have for-

gotten the treasures of Heaven, when the flesh clamors for gratification, and spiritual blindness and hardness envelop us round-about, even then, if the spark of faith lingers, though it burn never so faintly, there is always hope that that slight spark by God's grace may be fanned into a flame, and sooner or later the prodigal realizing that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, will rise up and go back to the Father's house. Nothing perhaps is so important in the spiritual life as this firm faith in the Divinity of the Man-God. When faith goes, the foundation is gone; yet how few realize the dangers to faith today. They are in the atmosphere that we breathe, in the papers that are laid daily at our breakfast table, in the magazines that lie in our parlors, in the books that come teeming from the presses, in the conversations of the men and women that we meet in the shop, in the store and in the street; and yet our Catholic people fail in the midst of this atmosphere to strengthen and warm that faith by Catholic studies, by attending the sermons in our churches and by the perusal of those Catholic books and periodicals which will give us a fuller knowledge of the teaching of the Church and ground us more solidly in our holy Faith.

A FRIEND'S TEARS

And Jesus wept. St. John 11:35.

WHEN Martha had given expression to her sublime act of faith: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into the world," she went in quest of her sister. "And when she had said these things, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying: 'The Master is come and calleth for thee.'" How touching that He should have asked for Mary! Mary was the sinner pardoned in Magdala. But sin once forgiven, is pardoned forever. The memory of pardoned sin never lingers in the mind of Christ.

The secrecy with which Martha delivered her message, and Mary's haste and quiet in acting upon it, indicate clearly, that they both had in mind the risk which our Lord incurred by coming back at this time to Judea. The awful scene in the Temple porch, when the Jews took up stones to hurl at Him, was one that Mary and Martha were not likely to forget. The Master's danger that day made such an impression upon their minds, that years could not efface it.

As soon as she heard the Master was come, Mary hastened out to meet Him. The Jews who had been condoling with her in grief, immediately followed, thinking she was making her way out to the hillside to weep at her brother's grave. It was a common practice among the Jews to visit and linger at the grave, especially during the first three days of mourning. Naturally then they thought this was the reason of Mary's going out.

Once outside, they soon perceived the real object of her movements; for they saw Mary hurrying down the road towards the throng, in the midst of which, no doubt, our Lord was clearly visible among His Disciples. Pushing her way through the crowd, and flinging herself at His feet, her pent-up emotions found expression in the same words, which probably she and her sister had been using together for the last four days, words so expressive of our Lord's love for their dead brother and their confidence that His love, had He been at the deathbed, would not have left them lonely.

In a paroxysm of grief, aroused naturally by the welcome presence of our Blessed Saviour, the beloved friend of their dead brother, Mary, sobbing, exclaimed, as she clung to His sacred feet:

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

It is not said in Holy Writ that Martha knelt at the feet of Jesus, and so it would seem, that this attitude in His presence was Mary's privilege; at least it is in this attitude that she is generally represented in the sacred pages.

"Jesus, therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were with her, groaned in spirit and troubled Himself." The sight of Magdalene's grief, the evidence of the sorrow all about Him, touched our Lord very deeply. Then, too, perhaps the presence of the Jews, who were so soon to witness the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection, reminded Him that even this grace would be rejected. He was surrounded by men who would hurry away from the empty tomb to plot and conspire with His enemies for His undoing. His own death and burial, and the tears of another Mary, and other devoted friends who were true to Him to the last, stood out before His mental vision and must have pained His Sacred Heart.

These few moments of grief are like an anticipated shadow of Gethsemane flung across His soul, and the weariness and sadness of that awful night-watch under the olive trees,

sweep over His soul and stir its deepest affections and tenderest emotions. Small wonder then that He "groaned in spirit and troubled Himself." Controlling His feelings, He, in the most natural and human manner, asked where they had laid him, as if He, who was in a moment to raise the dead from the grave, did not know. He said:

"Where have you laid him?"

They said:

"Lord, come and see."

He was to ask Magdalene, in all the glory of His Easter joy, "Whom seekest thou?" though He knew full well the object of her search and her tears.

Gently and tactfully He drew from Cleophas and his companion on the way to Emmaus the story of their trouble and departure from the other Disciples, though no least detail was unknown to Him. He was like a loving mother who pretends ignorance for the pleasure which is hers, at hearing her little ones tell in their own language things which she already knows. His delight, indeed, was to be with children of men.

"And Jesus wept."

Contemplating the tears of our Blessed Saviour, it will be well to remember that in

our case when we weep, when the tears flow down our cheeks, our emotions are often not under our control, our feelings we cannot keep in check; and so, at times they are of slight value and do not mean very deep affection; but when our Lord wept, He did so deliberately and of His own choice. No emotion could enter into His sacred soul and make itself felt, or find expression but as He wished. He saw that the pain of these loving sisters and friends for the dead was real and just and proper, and He allowed His Sacred Heart to go out to them in sympathy and love, and deliberately permitted the emotions of His soul to manifest themselves in tears of compassion, which were born in His Sacred Heart. These precious tears, hesitating for a moment between the eyelashes, burst from those eyes which were "the light of Bethlehem" and "the joy of Nazareth," and coursed down His beautiful manly cheeks.

Our Lord sympathized with Mary and Martha in their grief, and His tears were as genuine and as heart-begotten as any which sorrow and suffering have ever wrung from human eyes. They were the tears of God become Man. How the Angels must have wondered at the emotions of our Blessed Saviour!

They look up and see the Eternal Word amid the flames of the fires of eternal love in the Father's Bosom, and then see Him at the mountain-side with His beautiful face bathed in tears. How they must have wondered and adored! He who was the brightness of the Father's glory was weeping. He was surely like unto the children of men in all save sin.

How close these tears bring us to the Heart of our Saviour! How clearly they draw out that trait so unspeakably dear to us in our Blessed Saviour's character, His tenderness for human souls in sorrow and in grief! Go through His life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the crib to the cross, and we shall find it ever true that He was always kind and tender.

His very looks, the very expression of His countenance was kind, as when He touched the heart of Peter, or when He looked upon the young man in the Gospel and loved him. His affection is more delicate than a gentle sister's love. He is generous too in His tenderness, as when He rose from His knees in agony in the garden, His whole body weeping tears of blood and He permitted a mark of fondness from a treacherous disciple to serve as a sign for His enemies to apprehend Him and lead Him to death.

The same Sacred Heart that was so kind, so gentle, so tender in days of old, in the shadow of Mount Olivet, when Lazarus was bidden from the tomb, is just as kind today. It awaits us patiently through all the years, in the Tabernacle, under the light of the sanctuary lamp, to sympathize with our least pain and our smallest sorrow, to have compassion with us in our grief, and to wipe away our tears just as gently as He dried the eyes of Mary and Martha that evening by the hillside when He gave them back their brother.

Yet men are forgetful of such love and kindness, unmindful of such tender affection, they remain away from the Altar; for years they stray far from the Tabernacle and wonder why they are sad in spirit and why their lives are weak, cheerless and sinful.

"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

"Lazarus, come forth" St. John 11:43.

IN response to the invitation of the Jews who answered "Come and see" to our Lord's question, "Where have you laid him?" our Blessed Saviour, His eyes streaming with tears, followed the friends and mourners to the tomb. Some saw in these precious tears a proof of His love for the dead, and exclaimed:

"Behold, how He loved him."

Others asked wonderingly among themselves:

"Could not He that opened the eyes of the man born blind have caused that this man should not die?"

If by the touch of His hand in Jerusalem's Temple, over beyond the mountain, He had given sight to the blind, could He not have cured Lazarus, His friend? Why had He allowed one so dear to Him to pass into the grave if He had the power to heal? They had probably never heard of the marvel in Galilee when He gave back the dead young man to a weeping and widowed mother; so it never oc-

curred to them in their wildest fancy that He would bid Lazarus come forth alive from the grave. They never dreamt that at His word of power those quiet limbs would move, those closed eyes open, those silent lips speak again.

When they had come to the cave in the rock of the mountainside which was used as a tomb, Jesus said: "Take away the stone." At once Martha, amidst the awful silence which must have followed upon such a request, interposed replying that corruption had set in. Decomposition was already doing its gruesome work. The soul had long ago taken its flight, for it was the fourth day since that brother had died, and in warm climates decomposition began at once. Martha had forgotten the message sent her from beyond the Jordan that her brother would live, had forgotten our Lord's own words so recently uttered: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live." Our Lord gently reminded her of the need of faith, if her brother was to live again. Jesus said to her:

"Did I not say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?"

Our Lord stood at the entrance to the cave; Martha's faith became stronger under the re-

assurance so solemnly given; Mary, wondering and weeping, knelt at His feet. A hush of awe and a thrill of fear fell upon the silent throng as Jesus, lifting up His eyes, said:

"Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people that stand about have I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

In these words our Lord betrays the object of the miracle and of all the events that led up to it. When the sad news of Lazarus' illness was brought to Him beyond the Jordan, He tarried two days, lingering on in the works of His ministry. Then He slowly climbed the hills from the Jordan valley up the steep ascent to Bethany, as if unconscious of the sorrow and tears of the sisters and the death of His friend. It all seems so strange in One ever so eager to soothe with a divine sympathy human suffering and pain, ever so ready and willing to dry tears of sorrow and bereavement; yet these words spoken to the Father over the open grave give the reason and manifest the motive of His action: zeal for the souls of men, that the faith of those around Him might be enkindled, that these men might believe that He

was sent by the Father. At every instant while toiling beyond the Jordan, at every moment while laboring up the steep ascent to Bethany our Lord's Heart was yearning and longing to enkindle in the hearts of those about Him the gift of divine faith. The lack of this precious grace in their souls weighed much more heavily upon our Lord's spirit than the tears of Mary and Martha, than their brother's death, though these were no slight griefs to His loving soul.

Our Lord's delay brought it about that the death of Lazarus was so manifest that none could question it, no one could doubt it. The dead man was four days in the grave, and his own sister testified that decay had already begun. Our Lord makes His appeal to this wonder as a proof of His Divinity and as a means of arousing faith in the bystanders. By this miracle He will challenge their faith and their unbelief. It is like a last grace, which, if they reject their doom is sealed, if they accept the great gift is theirs. It is, as it were, the beginning of the end.

How beautiful the prayer! He thanked the Father for having heard Him in all that pertained to the ordering of the miracle, not for the miracle, for that was to be His own work,

the work of His divine power. He thanked the Father "because of the people that stood about," for He can now show them by almost a last appeal that He is sent of the Father, and that He does not do His wonders through any influence of the evil one as they said, but by the power of His own divine nature.

The stone was rolled away. Our Lord stood calmly at the opening and the others shrank back in fear, which is so natural in the presence of death. All eyes were riveted upon the dark and silent tomb, no lip moved save perhaps those of the sisters in silent prayer. Our Lord having raised His eyes and thanked the Father was silent for a moment, and then as He lifted His voice in a clear and distinct tone of power and authority, there rang into the quiet grave and along the mountain-side that brief command:

"Lazarus, come forth!"

That call had to be heard, that command had to be obeyed. The sound of that voice penetrated the darkness in the region beyond this world and thrilled the dead, and Lazarus like a spectre came forth from the grave alive and as his loving sisters had bound him. No signs of weakness or decay were upon him as he stood flushed with all the flood of restored

life flowing through his veins; and tradition tells us that the thirty years which followed were spent by him in toiling for the Master, who had called Him from the regions beyond the grave back to earth.

The Prophet tells us: "The stars have given forth their light in their watches and rejoiced. They were called, and they said: 'Here we are'; and with cheerfulness they shined forth to Him that made them." All nature obeys Him, all nature hears and carries out His will. Two years ago at His command the palsied man brought to Him at Capharnaum was cured, and the strength and love of other days came back to the poor paralytic. That miracle was wrought that men might know "that the Son of Man hath power to forgive sins," and the multitudes that saw the wonder that day, the throngs at Capharnaum that witnessed the sick man take up his bed and walk "glorified God, that gave such power to men." So when Lazarus came forth at the voice of our Blessed Saviour, when they saw him alive again whom in life they had known, "many, therefore, who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things

that Jesus had done." Strange indeed that after such a display of marvelous power anything but a favorable impression could have been produced. It might have been expected that the authorities would have sent a delegation to Christ, urging Him to teach them of His mission, to make known to them the glad tidings He was sent to announce. It might have been thought that they would have come thronging to Bethany and have hailed Him as the Messias. But no, so black was their jealousy of Christ, so baneful their envy, that even in the face of such a wonder, in the presence of such evidence, they were blind to their own best interests and at once took action to bring about His death. They hardened their hearts to this, our Lord's last call, closed their ears to His voice, and blind to the spiritual character of His work they at once determined upon His ruin and death.

Such indeed is the power of passion, such the influence of distorted wills and unworthy ends, such the strength of human motives that they can cloud the mind to the clearest evidence, to the most urgent reasons. In this we have a solution of the infidelity of many men's lives to-day. The lack of spiritual sense, the utter want of supernatural appreciation, is not

because there is not light and evidence enough; but men will not see the light because their lives are false, their morals impure and condemned by the teachings of faith. The gratified cravings of the senses render them dull and obtuse to spiritual influence, and they are willingly blinder to the action of faith upon their souls than Bartimæus was to the play of the sunlight at noon-day on Jordan's waters.